

LMC warns farmers of the dangers of slurry mixing

The Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland (LMC) is echoing advice issued on Monday (today) by the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) for farmers to take the proper precautions when mixing slurry with the closed period coming to an end at midnight on Wednesday, January 31.

It's widely documented that the process of mixing slurry is highly dangerous as it releases a mixture of extremely poisonous gases including hydrogen sulphide.

Prolonged exposure to hydrogen sulphide can, in some cases, prove fatal as it causes breathing difficulties and confusion. But even exposure to low levels of hydrogen sulphide can affect a person's sense of smell meaning that the gas can go undetected.

Calling on all farmers and farm workers to exercise caution, LMC Chief Executive, Ian Stevenson, said: "LMC echoes HSENI's call for extra care to be taken when handling slurry.

"The closed period ends at midnight on January 31 and with the recent inclement weather, many farmers will be at the limits of storage capacity and therefore may be under significant pressure to get slurry out quickly.

"As an affiliate member of the Farm Safety Partnership, LMC would like to remind all those who work in the countryside and especially farmers of the dangers of working with slurry."

Mr Stevenson continued: "LMC has taken steps over the past 12 months working closely with HSENI to help communicate farm safety messages. This included the introduction of a booklet titled 'The Importance of Properly Maintained Slurry Storage Facilities.' This leaflet is distributed to members of the Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIBL FQAS) if a non-conformance relating to slurry storage is raised at an inspection.

"LMC has also been communicating key safety messages throughout the year to farmers via text message.

"Whilst working in the countryside can seem like the idyllic occupation there are very real hazards to farmers each and every day and as the closed period for slurry spreading comes to a close it is critical that farmers remember the 'Stop and Think SAFE' message."

The Farm Safety Partnership in conjunction with HSENI developed the following slurry mixing code which encourages farmers to:

- Keep children away from the area at all times when working with slurry.
- If possible, mix on a windy day.
- Open all doors.
- Take all animals out of the building before starting to mix slurry.
- Use outside mixing points first.
- If slats are removed, cover exposed areas of the tank beside the pump/mixer to stop anything falling in.
- Start the pump/mixer-then get out and stay out of the building for as long as possible- at least 30 minutes.
- Anytime you have to go into the building, try to make sure that another adult knows what you are doing and can get help if necessary.
- If you have to re-enter to move the pump or change the direction of the pump, leave the building as soon as this is done- do not go back in for as long as possible- at least another 30 minutes.

Never

- Rely on filter type facemasks.
- Use gas monitors as a substitute for working safely.
- Have naked flames near slurry, as slurry gas mixture is flammable.
- Stand close to the exhaust of a vacuum tanker when it is being filled.

If you find someone has been overcome during slurry mixing, if possible, stop the pump and get the person to fresh air but do not put yourself at risk in the process. If breathing is weak or stopped, artificial respiration may be effective. Contact the emergency service and seek immediate medical attention.

For further information about safety with slurry contact the HSENI helpline on: 0800 0320 121 or visit their farm safety topic page.

ENDS

Notes to editors

1). HSENI's announcement: <https://www.hseni.gov.uk/news/farmers-take-extra-care-when-mixing-slurry-0>

2). The Farm Safety Partnership's 'Stop and Think SAFE' farm safety campaign focuses on the four main causes of death and injury on our farms- slurry, animals, falls and equipment.

For further information contact LMC on: 028 9263 3000.

Media contacts:

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