

Dairy farm audits find nearly half have no safety policy in place

Audits of Queensland dairies have found forty-three per cent have no written WHS policy in place and fifteen per cent have only a verbal policy.

Of equal concern, given the high rate of quad bike incidents in Queensland, the audits found nearly 38 per cent of workers never or rarely wear a helmet when riding a quad bike. As well, most businesses believed they didn't require a traffic management plan. Others reckoned they should have a plan, but hadn't actually addressed the issue.

The audits were carried out last year under a new work safety program for the state's dairy industry which aims to improve the capacity of business owners and managers to manage safety. The ongoing program is compliance focused, but safety tips and advice have also been provided, including the *Serious about farm safety* guide.

The program was launched after injury statistics revealed 117 claims for serious injuries over the last five years and one fatality, with 21 per cent of claims caused by livestock and 10 per cent involving vehicles. The majority of injuries were related to joints/ligaments/muscles, fractures and lacerations, with almost half of the injuries involving upper limbs, a quarter lower limbs and 14 per cent to the body/trunk.

Anecdotal evidence indicated the industry's high-risk issues included livestock handling; electrical safety; quad bikes; chemicals; and machinery. Manual handling risks, zoonotic diseases and mental health were also prevalent.

The on-farm visits were completed late last year in South East Queensland, with 47 dairies audited in the Scenic Rim, Darling Downs, Sunshine Coast and South Burnett regions. Nearly two-thirds of businesses indicated they would be interested in attending a face-to-face workshop on work health and safety.

Apart from the disappointing WHS policy, traffic management and quad bike issues, the audits also revealed:

- risk assessments were rarely or never completed by 38% of businesses
- safety induction training was completed often by 38% of businesses and sometimes by 32%, but over a quarter of the businesses rarely or never provided training and induction
- only 38% of businesses reported having control measures in place for working at heights but more work is needed to boost safety, particularly for climbing silos

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- Fewer than a quarter (23%) of the businesses had measures in place to manage the health and safety of visitors
- For diseases management, a quarter of the group had no measures in place to manage the risk of zoonotic diseases for QFever vaccinations and the same amount said no-one had been vaccinated, while 13% had only some people vaccinated.

The next phase of the program will start in March, looking at the overall WHS compliance of the businesses, including machinery and guarding, electrical, chemicals, quad bikes, zoonoses, working at heights and safety management systems.

If you'd like advice on how to manage safety, Dairy Australia (DA) has developed a Dairy Farm Safety Kit which was rolled out nationally in 2018. Workplace Health and Safety Queensland supported the DA workshops and provided advice on safety legislation and compliance. ■ ■

Further information

Dairy Australia has distributed nearly 2000 copies of these kits Australia wide. More information is at DA Farm Safety Kit.

For more other information and resources on farm safety, including the *Serious about farm safety* guide, visit www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/agriculture

