

Health & Safety Factsheet No. 2

COSHH (CONTROL OF SUBSTANCES HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH) IN THE THOROUGHBRED BREEDING INDUSTRY (UK)



Exposure to the types of hazardous substances within the equine industry can cause a number of severe health effects, including dermatitis, occupational asthma, allergic reactions, burns, pregnancy-related issues and infections.

Legal responsibilities – COSHH assessment

Studs involve daily hazards such as handling horses, working around vehicles and machinery, manual Any business that uses or creates substances, or carries out processes which might cause harm to health are legally required to control the risks under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)2002 (as amended). This involves completing a dedicated assessment to determine the risks and ensure that exposure is controlled. This is similar in principle to a risk assessment, but requires a specific form to record the substances used, the potential risks, and the control measures in place, helping to protect both people and horses. The general risk assessment should not be used.

What is a COSHH assessment

A COSHH assessment helps identify and control risks from hazardous substances commonly used around studs, yards, and breeding facilities. In this context, a COSHH assessment:

- **Identifies hazardous substances** – such as disinfectants, detergents, veterinary medicines, pesticides, fertilisers, fuels, oils, and dusts from bedding or feed. Where possible, consider the use of safer alternatives.
- **Assesses how staff, veterinarians, farriers, and visitors may be exposed** – during routine tasks like stable cleaning, foaling, handling horses, or maintaining facilities.
- **Considers health risks** – including skin irritation, respiratory problems, eye injuries, pregnancy issues or longer-term health effects.
- **Identifies exposure limits and health surveillance requirements** – to ensure controls are adequate.
- **Sets out control measures** – such as safe storage, correct dilution and application, ventilation, use of appropriate PPE, and good hygiene practices. PPE should be used as a last resort as it is not as reliable or effective as other control measures.
- **Ensures staff are trained** – in safe handling, mixing, and disposal of substances, particularly in sensitive areas such as foaling units.
- **Outlines emergency arrangements** – including fire-fighting, first-aid and spillages.
- **Details waste disposal arrangements** – for each category of waste.

Safety data sheets should be obtained from manufacturers and used to complete the COSHH Assessment. These contain detailed information regarding the properties of a product.

Care should be taken when using two products together, as there is a potential for non-compatibility resulting in an adverse chemical reaction.

While COSHH is a health and safety regulation designed to protect human workers from hazardous substances (including chemicals, medicines, and biological agents used on animals), its application overlaps with the *Animal Welfare Act 2006 (Section 9)*. This places a duty of care on owners to protect animals from pain, suffering, injury, and disease. Improper use of hazardous substances could lead to an offence under this Act if it causes suffering to the animal.

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