



How to manage the risks that can cause occupational lung diseases in

## AGRICULTURE:

### Managing risks on a cattle station



Liam and Henrietta Weatherall own and operate a cattle station where their family of 6 work. The Weatheralls also employ 5 permanent employees, as well as seasonal workers during peak months.

As the persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) Liam and Henrietta know that under work health and safety laws, they have the primary duty of care for the health and safety of their workers, including themselves and others at the workplace. They know they must eliminate hazards at their workplace, as much as they reasonably can. If the hazards can't be eliminated, the Weatheralls must minimise the risks of them as much as they reasonably can.



#### Assess the risk

Liam and Henrietta undertake a risk assessment to identify and characterise the hazards at their workplace and implement and review the control measures that are in place, in consultation with their workers. They identify fumigation, using hazardous chemicals and handling hay as tasks that generate fumes and dusts that can be released into the air. The airborne contaminants from these tasks have the potential to cause harm to their workers and others who might be at the station.



#### Control the risk

Liam and Henrietta inspect the station including the house grounds, sheds, and hay storage to identify where these hazards are located. They first look at all the options to eliminate any exposure to fumigation chemicals or hay dusts. After assessing the options, they decide they cannot eliminate these from their workplace, so they must minimise the risk that the dusts and fumes pose.

Liam and Henrietta put up signs around the farm where fumigation or work with hay is undertaken. They also hold introductory safety sessions when new workers start on the farm. They continue to keep an eye on whether everyone is performing their work safely and whether there's anything more they can do to minimise risks.

During one inspection, Henrietta hears one of the workers, Kim, coughing. Kim is manually spreading hay, which is creating a lot of dusts. Knowing that breathing in hay dusts and any spores from mouldy hay can cause lung disease, Henrietta asks Kim to use the hay bale processor and spreader to minimise the risk of breathing in the dusts.

Henrietta also notices that a new worker, Salesi, has been preparing chemicals incorrectly, even after he was trained to use the decanting station that has been set up with the appropriate equipment and ventilation. She shows Salesi again how to correctly use the decanting station when handling chemicals and instructs him to always read the Safety Data Sheets before working with a hazardous chemical so that it can be safely stored, handled or used.

Lastly, Henrietta makes sure there is appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for everyone. She organises training with an occupational hygienist to talk to the workers about why it is important to wear PPE including gloves and a mask when working with the various hazards on a farm. They are also trained on how to fit check, use, and maintain their PPE.

Liam and Henrietta regularly talk to their workers and consult them on how these control measures are working to ensure they continue to protect their workers' health and safety.