

June 2020

High-pressure water blasting of poultry sheds with asbestos cladding

This safety alert highlights the serious health and safety risks of water blasting poultry farm sheds with asbestos cladding.

What is happening?

WorkSafe has become aware poultry and broiler farm sheds are being cleaned between **chick rearing cycles** using high pressure water blasting. In New Zealand, a large number of these farms have sheds clad inside and out with asbestos containing material.

What we know

High pressure water blasting can disturb asbestos fibres in cladding and distribute them throughout the shed and environment. When the fibres are airborne they can be inhaled by workers and others, which can result in asbestos-related diseases.

High pressure water blasting should not be undertaken to clean sheds. Instead, a soft wash option should be chosen.

Approximately 220 New Zealanders die every year as a result of asbestos related disease through exposure to airborne asbestos fibres.

What you must do

The Health and Safety at Work (Asbestos) Regulations 2016 prohibits the use of high pressure water spray and compressed air on asbestos. The Regulations also require those with asbestos in their workplace to, identify it and develop an asbestos management plan and manage it safely.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015, which the Regulations support, places duties on employers, contractors, workers and others, to work together to ensure that work is carried out safely.



FIGURE 1: Example of a chicken shed built from asbestos containing materials

Farmers, breeders, and shed owners need to identify if sheds and buildings contain asbestos, or asbestos containing material so they can record these details and management controls in an asbestos management plan.

If asbestos containing material is damaged, or is showing signs of disrepair, it should be a priority for removal, using a licenced asbestos removalist.

The asbestos management plan must be accessible to those who need to know, particularly cleaning contractors. Workers and contractors should also be involved in health and safety discussions about managing the risks.

Guidance

WorkSafe has a wide range of advice on its website including:

[Managing health and safety](#)

[Overlapping duties](#)

[Asbestos management plans](#)

[Working with asbestos](#)