

## Toolbox Talks



### We all need to remember

- If you are unsure of anything or feel that something you have been asked to do is dangerous, DO NOT begin the task. ASK for assistance or more information and we will work together to find a safe way to do the job or solve the problem.
- Ensure you are aware of the location of the nearest First Aid Kit.
- Make sure everyone is fit for work, free from signs of fatigue, drugs or alcohol. If in doubt, ask or talk to your manager.
- This farm is a workplace, but may also be a place of residence for the owner, their managers and employees. Be vigilant for children and bystanders at all times. Refer to *Child Safety on Farms*.
- The safety, health and wellbeing of all who live on, work on and visit this farm is the most important responsibility we all share.

Even if we are busy and under time or financial pressures, safety MUST come first.



**emergencyplus**

Save the App that could save your life.

### EMERGENCY CONTACTS

In case of emergency, CALL 000 or your local emergency service provider, then call your manager or supervisor.

**POISONS 13 11 26**  
Poisons Information Centre

## A Practical Guide Manual Handling

Manual handling refers to any activity that involves lifting, carrying, pushing, or pulling objects or loads by hand or bodily force. Manual handling is a common part of everyday jobs in most workplaces and is necessary and important across many different kinds of farming enterprises. Musculoskeletal injuries like strains, sprains, slips, back injuries, fall and crush incidents can easily occur if incorrect techniques are used, or control measures are not put in place.

### The Hazards and Risks

Lifting heavy items isn't the only way to develop a manual handling injury. A manual task is hazardous if it involves any of the following:

**Repetitive Force:** using force repeatedly over a period of time (eg. Lifting and stacking goods onto a pallet, gripping bucket handles).

**Sustained Force:** occurs when force is applied continually over a period of time (eg. Pushing or pulling a wheelbarrow or trolley around a worksite, operating a thumb throttle on a quad bike).

**High Force:** occurs when increased muscle effort is required in response to a task. It may be from the back, arm or leg muscles or by the hands and fingers (eg. Lifting, lowering, or carrying an object that requires the individual to use significant muscle effort).

**Sudden Force:** jerky or unexpected movements while handling an item or load (eg. Throwing or catching feedbags or hay bales).

**Repetitive Movement:** using the same parts of the body to repeat similar movements continuously over a period of time (eg. Milking a cow by hand).

**Sustained Posture:** where part of or the whole body is kept in the same position for a prolonged period (eg. Squatting while servicing an item of plant or a vehicle, bending over to shear a sheep).

**Awkward Posture:** where any part of the body is in an uncomfortable or unnatural position (eg. Twisting the neck or back to observe towed equipment, shoeing a horse).

**Whole Body Vibration:** when vibration is transmitted through the whole body, usually via a supporting surface, such as a seat or the floor in heavy vehicles or machinery (eg. Operating mobile plant such as heavy earthmoving machinery).

**Hand-Arm Vibration:** when vibration is transferred through a vibrating tool, steering wheel or controls in heavy machinery to the hand and arm. (eg. Using rattle guns, chainsaws, jackhammers, or vibrating compacting plates).

### Possible Harm

**Musculoskeletal Injuries:** The primary risk associated with manual handling on farms is the potential for musculoskeletal injuries, including sprains, strains, and back injuries. These injuries can be painful, long-lasting, and can significantly impact your ability to work.

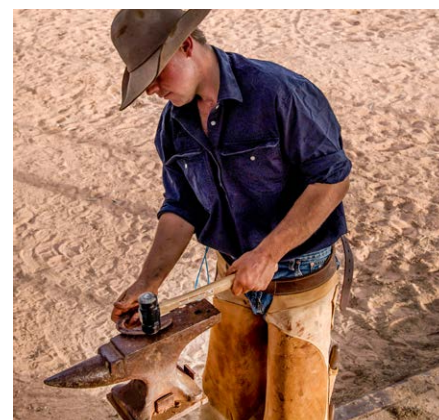
**Slip, Trip, and Fall Injuries:** Lifting or carrying objects can obstruct your view and balance, making you more susceptible to slipping, tripping, and falling, especially in uneven terrain.

**Crush Injuries:** In some cases, manual handling can involve moving heavy machinery or equipment. If not done safely, there's a risk of crush injuries if you get caught between objects or pinned by heavy loads.

**Repetitive Strain Injuries:** Repeated manual handling tasks can lead to repetitive strain injuries over time. These injuries can affect your muscles, tendons, and joints, causing chronic pain and reduced mobility.

**Whole Body Vibration Injuries:** Exposure to whole body vibration can result in lower back pain, degeneration of the lumbar vertebrae and disc herniation.

**Hand Arm Vibration:** Continuous exposure to vibrations can impede blood circulation in the hand and forearm, causing harm to nerves and tendons. Localised vibration can lead to conditions like 'vibration-induced white finger' and 'carpal tunnel syndrome.'



## Toolbox Talks

### A Practical Guide Manual Handling

## Reducing the Risk

To protect yourself and your fellow farm workers from the hazards of manual handling, it's essential to follow safe practices and use proper techniques. Here are some key steps to reduce the risk:

### Assess the Task

Before you begin any manual handling task, assess it carefully. Consider the weight and size of the object, the distance you need to carry it, and any obstacles in your path. Determine if there is a way that the task can be done that will reduce the risk of strain or injury. If vibration is a factor consider what can be done to minimise the exposure.

### Change the Load

Look for ways to reduce or distribute the weight of the object to be carried. Split loads or make them smaller if possible. Put awkward items in a different container with better grip or handles.

### Use Mechanical Aids

#### • Lifting and Carrying Equipment

Whenever possible, use mechanical aids such as trolleys, wheelbarrows, forklifts, or tractor attachments to move heavy objects. These tools are designed to reduce the physical strain on your body.

#### • Ergonomic Tools and Equipment

Tools and equipment with ergonomic designs help maintain natural body positions, reducing strain on muscles and joints. Examples include workshop creeper seats that support workers in a reclining position while working under machinery, ergonomic shovels, rakes, and hoes with padded handles and

### Links and Resources

SafeWork Australia – Hazardous Manual Tasks  
[safeworkaustralia.gov.au/duties-tool/agriculture/additional-info/hazardous-manual-tasks](https://safeworkaustralia.gov.au/duties-tool/agriculture/additional-info/hazardous-manual-tasks)

SafeWork Australia – Model Code of Practice: Hazardous Manual Tasks  
[safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/model-code-practice-hazardous-manual-tasks](https://safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/model-code-practice-hazardous-manual-tasks)



proper grips, sit/stand benches and chairs that allow for posture and position changes throughout the day.

#### • Pneumatic Assist Devices

Adjustable benches and pallet stands can keep loads between knee and shoulder height and can reduce the physical effort required to lift or lower items.

#### • Mirrors or Cameras

Installing mirrors or cameras on machines where the operator needs to monitor conditions behind the machine can reduce awkward postures.

### Follow Proper Lifting Techniques

When you must lift an object manually, follow these guidelines:

- Keep your feet shoulder-width apart for balance.
- Bend your knees, not your back, to lower yourself to the object.
- Get a good grip and hug the load close to your body.
- Use your legs and hips to lift, not your back.
- Lift smoothly and without jerking motions.
- Avoid twisting your body while carrying the load.

### Team Lift

For very heavy or awkward objects, get help from a coworker. Use teamwork to distribute the load evenly and ensure everyone communicates regarding lifting and movement.

### Clear Pathways

Before moving any load, ensure your pathway is clear of obstacles, such as tools, debris, or uneven ground. This reduces the risk of slipping, tripping, or falling.

### Wear Proper Footwear

Wear appropriate footwear with good grip and ankle support to prevent slips, trips, and falls while handling loads.

### Seek Regular Training

Manual handling techniques and safety procedures are subject to change as more is known about preventing manual handling injuries. Keeping up to date on preventative measures is important. If new tasks, procedures, or equipment are introduced into a workplace then induction training should include updates on best practices and any engineering or mechanical aids available.

### Take Breaks and Rest

If a task involves prolonged manual handling, take regular breaks to rest and stretch your muscles. Overexertion can lead to fatigue and an increased risk of injury. If breaks aren't always possible then rotate tasks between people to reduce continuous exposure to repetitive tasks.

### Report Hazards

If you encounter hazardous manual handling situations or believe that improvements can be made to work processes, report them to your supervisor or farm manager.

### Wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Depending on the task, you may need to wear PPE such as anti-vibration gloves, and safety boots.

In summary, manual handling is an integral part of farm work in Australia, but it carries significant risks if not done safely. By assessing tasks, using mechanical aids, following proper techniques, and working together as a team, you can reduce the risk of musculoskeletal injuries and create a safer work environment for yourself and your fellow farm workers. Your health and well-being are essential, so always prioritise safety when handling objects on the farm.



# Toolbox Talks

## Facilitator Guide

### INSTRUCTIONS

The information sheet is background information ONLY. Be sure to customise your talk to your operation and facilities.

#### How to deliver an effective Toolbox Talk

- Know your Topic. If you don't understand the material it will be hard to explain and make it relevant.
- Print copies of the Toolbox Talk Info sheet for yourself and each of the participants.
- Hold the talk in a location relevant to the topic being discussed.
- Explain why the Toolbox Talk is being held.
- Stay on topic and keep it simple.
- Encourage conversation and participation.
- Be sure to give real life examples whenever possible.
- Be open to questions.
- Read through the provided cases studies.
- After each study ask attendees what could have been done to prevent this situation.
- Conclude with a brief review of the main points or a summary based on the discussion.
- Record the details of the Toolbox Talk including the location, date and names of attendees.

**Note:** This Facilitator Guide is intended to provide a basic structure for conducting a Toolbox Talk. Customise it as needed to suit your specific audience and objectives. Always prioritise safety and ensure that participants have a clear understanding of the information presented.

## A Practical Guide Manual Handling

### Introduction

- Welcome everyone.
- Explain why the Toolbox Talk is being held.
- Emphasise the importance of being aware of manual handling hazards.

### Icebreaker

Consider starting with a brief question or scenario related to Manual Handling Safety

to engage participants. For example, "What tasks have you performed in the past that could result in a manual handling injury?"

### Distribution of Resources

Handout printed Toolbox Talk Information Sheets and any other resources.

### Key Points

#### Know Your Limits

- Never lift objects heavier than you can manage comfortably.
- When in doubt, ask for help or use equipment like wheelbarrows or trolleys.

#### Plan your tasks

- Discuss how the weights of items to be lifted can be reduced or more evenly distributed.
- Highlight the importance of planning the route to be taken and clearing it of obstacles and slip, trip, and fall hazards.

#### Proper Lifting Technique

- Demonstrate how to bend your knees, not your back, when lifting.
- Demonstrate how to keep the object close to your body.
- Demonstrate lifting with your legs, not your back muscles.

#### Teamwork

- Encourage working together when handling heavy loads.
- Promote task rotation and frequent breaks when tasks involve repetitive movements.
- Discuss ways to communicate clearly and coordinate movements with your team members.

#### Use Equipment Wisely

- Use appropriate tools and equipment to make lifting easier.
- Maintain and check equipment regularly for safety.



### Interactive Discussion and Case Studies

Encourage participants to share their experiences, challenges, or questions related to manual handling.

Use the Case Studies on the next page to prompt conversation. Read the case studies out loud and ask participants for their thoughts.

### Q&A Session

Allow participants to ask questions and seek clarification on any topics covered.

### Conclusion

Summarise the main takeaways from the talk: how you want workers to stay safe.

Reiterate the importance of everyone's commitment to safety on the farm.

### Closing Remarks

Thank participants for their time and attention.

Remind them to apply the knowledge gained from this Toolbox Talk in their daily work.

### Feedback

Ask for feedback on the Toolbox Talk content and delivery to improve future sessions.

# Toolbox Talks Facilitator Guide

## CASE STUDIES



### Risk Management Tools

[DOWNLOAD ONLINE MATRIX](#)

Use this simple and effective tool to assess and manage the risk of your farming activities prior to commencing.

All team members can join in and contribute, developing different ways to manage risks on your farm. Doing a risk assessment helps determine hazards and develop appropriate control measures to lessen risks.

[farmsafe.org.au](http://farmsafe.org.au)

P. +61 2 6269 5622 | E. [info@farmsafe.org.au](mailto:info@farmsafe.org.au)

**Disclaimer:** This *Toolbox Talk* is intended as a *general* guide only and is designed to be used to increase risk awareness and safe work practices - it is not legal advice and does not take the place of proper individualised on-farm workplace inductions, work, health and safety training, or any other tailored steps which may be necessary to protect health and safety at specific worksites.

### CASE STUDY 1 A Weighty Task

#### Scenario

Sunny Vale Farms has just had a pallet of horse feed delivered to the farm. The pallet contains 30 bags of horse feed weighing 20kg each. The total weight of the pallet is over 600kg.

QUESTION	ANSWERS MAY INCLUDE
<p>The horse feed needs to be stacked in the feed shed which is approximately 5 meters away from where the pallet was unloaded. What is the best way to move the feed?</p> <p>A. Move the whole pallet with a tractor or forklift.                      B. Move 2 or 3 bags at a time using a wheelbarrow.                      C. Move the bags one at a time by carrying them.                      D. None of the above.</p>	<p>Even though it is only a short distance a mechanical aid like a tractor or fork-lift would provide the lowest risk of musculoskeletal injury to a worker.</p> <p>Use this question as an opportunity to discuss the tools and equipment that you have available to reduce manual handling risks.</p>
<p>There is no tractor or forklift available to move the whole pallet of horse feed. How many bags of horse feed should be moved at one time using the wheelbarrow?</p>	<p>There is no correct answer to this question. This question is designed to promote discussion about everyone having their own physical limits and only performing tasks that are within their capabilities.</p> <p>This question can be used to brainstorm other ways of moving the horse feed.</p>
<p>The top rows of horse feed have been moved from the pallet into the feed shed. Only the bottom layer remains. This layer is below knee height. Does this bottom layer of feed bags pose a higher risk of musculoskeletal injury than the top layers?</p>	<p><b>YES.</b> Even though the weight of the bags isn't any different, once items need to be lifted from below waist level there is more strain placed on the lower back.</p>
<p>How can the bottom layer of bags be lifted into the wheelbarrow safely?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Team lifting.</b> Have a person lifting from each end of the bag.</li> <li>• Proper lifting techniques.</li> <li>• Use a pallet jack (or similar) to raise the height of the pallet, and hence raise the height of the last layer of feed bags.</li> <li>• When the pallet is removed from the truck, make sure it is positioned on a pallet stand or in an area where the bottom row of bags can be easily reached at a higher level.</li> </ul>

### CASE STUDY 2 Tractor Vibrations

#### Scenario

Jane spends several hours each day driving the tractor across uneven terrain, feeling the constant vibrations transmitted through her body. The tractor's seat and suspension system are worn out, amplifying the vibrations. Over time, Jane starts experiencing discomfort in her lower back and notices tingling sensations in her hands and arms.

QUESTION	ANSWERS MAY INCLUDE
<p>Is Jane experiencing symptoms of a potential manual handling injury?</p>	<p>The answer to this is likely to be YES. Prolonged exposure to whole body vibration can cause these symptoms. Activities that cause whole body vibration are considered manual handling.</p>
<p>What could be done to reduce the risk of manual handling injuries when operating the tractor in this situation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The tractor's seat and suspension system should be assessed and repaired or replaced as necessary.</li> <li>• Other causes of excessive vibration including worn engine mounts should be investigated.</li> <li>• If possible, tasks should be rotated or more frequent breaks allowed.</li> </ul>

# On-farm Toolbox Talk Sign-off Sheet

## INSTRUCTIONS

This sign-off template is available for you to use as part of your training packages. You will need to attach all evidence of all information given to the person that you have spoken with regarding this specific Toolbox Talk. This may include checklists, policies, safe operating procedures or notes about the conversations had, questions asked and other information provided.

Holding Toolbox Talks or safety meetings are not just about checking a box - they need to be tailored to your farming environment, meet the legislative requirements, and designed to support your employee, contractor, family member or visitor throughout the time that they spend living or working on your property. Inductions are only the first step in your WHS journey and it is important that you continue to create a safety culture on your farm by continuing to engage with your employees on any matters that may affect their health, safety and wellbeing.

The employee/contractor/visitor/family member that you have had this conversation with should acknowledge that they have received, discussed and understood all the relevant information that has been presented to them and attached and sign in the relevant space provided. A good practice is to ensure that the employee initials or signs each relevant piece of information that is attached and retains a copy of each for their own information. Records of WHS conversations should be kept alongside records of employment or in your work, health and safety management system and be updated as needed or as required by law.

Please list and/or attach all documents that have been provided including checklists, policies, safe operating procedures, etc.

## On-farm Toolbox Talk Participants

### EMPLOYER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have provided a relevant safety meeting to our farming business and that the employee has received, discussed and understood the listed and attached information.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

### 1. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature



# Toolbox Talks Facilitator Guide

A Practical Guide  
Manual Handling

## On-farm Toolbox Talk Sign-off Sheet

CONTINUED



**Australian Government**  
Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry

This project is supported by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), through funding from the Australian Government's National Farm Safety Education Fund.

### 2. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

### 3. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

### 4. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

### 5. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature