



Tractor Talks

Respiratory Illness

Fresh air and a healthy lifestyle are often associated with farming. However, farm work can expose you to respiratory hazards known to cause serious illnesses. Here are some facts about common respiratory illnesses among farmworkers:

- **Farmer's Lung.** *Inhaling mold spores from baled hay, stored grain, or silage can lead to an allergic reaction that includes shortness of breath, chest tightness, coughing, and flu-like symptoms.*
- **Organic Dust Toxicity Syndrome (ODTS).** *Also called Silo Unloaders Syndrome or Grain Fever, ODTS is caused by inhaling organic dust. Areas with high dust levels include silos, grain storage, hog, and poultry barns. Symptoms usually appear 4-6 hours after exposure and include cough, fever, chills, fatigue, and muscle pain.*
- **Silo Filler's Disease.** *Fermenting silage gives off a pungent gas (nitrogen dioxide) that, when inhaled, can cause lung damage even though there may not be any symptoms. Exposure higher levels (20ppm or more) can cause coughing, coughing up blood, shortness of breath, and chest pain.*

If you experience ANY symptoms possibly related to a respiratory exposure, tell your supervisor and your doctor. Let your doctor know that you work on a farm. Repeated or prolonged exposures can lead to serious illness and death.

Reduce Your Risk of Respiratory Illness

- Avoid grain silo entry during the first 3 days after filling.
- Store grain at recommended moisture content levels.
- Ventilate silos for 15 to 20 minutes before entry.
- When cleaning a barn or stable, lightly water the areas to reduce airborne dust.
- For best protection, a respirator may need to be worn. Make sure you choose the right respirator and understand how to use it correctly.

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