

# Developing Safe Farming Practices

## Guide 1: Lone Working



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**Lone working is common in many agricultural businesses, from small family farms that do not employ staff to large scale enterprises with farm workers who are regularly required to carry out tasks on their own.**

Lone working not only increases the risk of physical harm from accidents, but prolonged periods of working in isolation can also lead to mental health problems associated with loneliness and feelings of hopelessness when things are not going well.

The law requires employers to consider and address any health and safety risks and put reasonable measures in place to ensure tasks can be carried out safely. Workers also have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves, those around them and adhere to any practices and measures that have been put in place by their employer.



The European Agricultural Fund  
for Rural Development  
**Europe investing in rural areas**



**Scottish Government**  
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[gov.scot](http://gov.scot)

## How to reduce the risk from lone working:

### Provide Training

- Make sure that farm workers working alone have adequate training to perform the tasks required.
- Staff should be trained to recognise their limits; when to stop work and seek advice or assistance.

### Assess the Risk

- Involve lone working staff in the risk assessment process.
- Take account of the capabilities and training of those undertaking the task.
- Are workers undertaking the task medically fit to do so?
- Can all of the machinery, livestock and substances involved in the work be safely handled by one person?
- Update the risk assessment for seasonal changes, adjustments to animal handling and new vehicles and machinery.
- Make visitors aware of risks and control measures.

### Supervise

- Consider if high risk activities require supervision or doubling up of staff- such as handling livestock.
- New workers should be supervised until they are competent in undertaking the task on their own.

### Monitor and Communicate

- Implement a system to know where people are and when they are to finish a task.
- Consider using a monitoring device or lone working mobile phone app. Think about lack of phone signal in rural areas and have a back- up plan.
- Plan ahead, if you are self employed then let a spouse, neighbour or relative know where you are and when you will finish. Similarly there should be regular contact between lone working staff and supervisors.

### Have a Contingency Plan

- Make sure everyone knows the action plan in case of an emergency; know who to contact and who is first aid trained.
- Provide self first-aid training and awareness and first aid kits.

### Manage stress and mental health

- Communicate regularly, stay in touch with neighbouring farmers to share ideas and talk about concerns.
- Take time to enjoy activities with friends, family and your community.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help with a task or training.

## Useful links

HSE Lone Working Guidelines

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf>

NFU Lone Working on Farms Guidelines

<https://www.nfuonline.com/cross-sector/farm-business/farm-safety-partnership/guidance/lone-working/>

RSABI for emotional support

<https://rsabi.org.uk/Home-Page> / 0300 1114166