

# Cardiff University fined £280,000 after two employees develop occupational asthma

- Two employees developed occupational asthma after prolonged exposure to animal allergens.
- Both are now permanently disabled; one was unable to continue in their role.
- HSE found the university failed to identify and control the risks for over 15 years.

Cardiff University has been fined £280,000 after two employees developed occupational asthma because of exposure to animal allergens in the workplace.

Britain's workplace regulator, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), found that between 2008 to 2025, the university failed in its duty to identify and implement suitable controls to prevent employees' exposure to animal allergens. Both employees affected are now permanently disabled as a result, and one was unable to continue in their employment.

## **In a statement, one of the affected employees said:**

"I was diagnosed with occupational asthma and occupational rhinitis, and my lung function has been permanently decreased by 33 percent.

"As a result, my breathing has been terrible, and I struggle walking any distance. Going upstairs is really difficult. I have to take steroid inhaler, a nasal spray and a bronchodilator throughout the day as I need it.

"I become breathless when having long conversations and I am unable to walk and talk at the same time anymore."

HSE's investigation found that Cardiff University had failed to put in place adequate measures to protect workers from exposure to animal allergens, despite relevant legislation being in place since 1989 under the [Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations \(COSHH\)](#), and specific guidance relating to [laboratory animal workers](#) being available since 2011.

Occupational asthma is a recognised work-related disease that can have serious and permanent consequences. Employers working with animals or other biological agents must assess and control the risks of exposure to allergens and ensure appropriate protective measures are in place.

Cardiff University pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The university was fined £280,000 and ordered to pay £11,745 in costs at Cardiff Magistrates' Court on 30 April 2026.

## **After the hearing, HSE inspector Janet Hensey said:**

"This was a case of Cardiff University completely failing to identify the

risk to employees working with animals and not putting suitable controls in place to prevent exposure.

“The fact this went on unchecked for 15 years is truly concerning.

“Occupational asthma is a recognised work-related disease with potentially disabling consequences.

“HSE will not hesitate to take action against organisations, which do not do all that they can to keep people safe.”

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Daniel Poole and paralegal officer Helen Jacob.

### **Further information:**

1. [The Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We are dedicated to protecting people & places and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available. Additionally, specific to this case here: [The Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005](#).
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) are available.
4. Guidance can be found here: [Control of Substances Hazardous to Health \(COSHH\) – HSE](#) and here: [Laboratory animal worker – HSE](#)
5. HSE does not pass sentences, set guidelines or collect any fines imposed. Relevant sentencing guidelines must be followed unless the court is satisfied that it would be contrary to the interests of justice to do so. The sentencing guidelines for health and safety offences in England can be found [here](#) and those for Scotland [here](#).