

Dairy farm fined after employee permanently blinded by disinfectant chemicals

Beechdean Farm Limited has been fined following an incident in which an employee was permanently blinded by corrosive chemicals used in cleaning.

High Wycombe Magistrates' Court heard that in August 2017, an employee was cleaning the walls of the dairy farm at Old House Farm in North Dean, Buckinghamshire, using a corrosive disinfectant DM CiD, which contains potassium hydroxide. The pump sprayer being used unexpectedly developed a fault and ruptured into the face of the employee. His face became covered in the caustic and corrosive disinfectant, rendering him permanently blind in both eyes.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Beechdean Farm Limited failed to plan and supervise the use of chemicals for cleaning the dairy and did not have effective emergency arrangements in place.

Beechdean Farm Limited of North Dean, Buckinghamshire pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and has been fined £8,000 and ordered to pay costs of £11,879.94.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Stephen Faulkner said "While it was possible for both the pump sprayer and the chemical to be used for cleaning, this incident could so easily have been avoided by implementing correct control measures, safe working practices and appropriate emergency arrangements.

"Agriculture is an industry with a high accident rate, and the chemicals and activity involved in this incident are common in dairy farming, so this case should send a message to farms about the dangers of working with chemicals.

"Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards."

Notes to editors

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. hse.gov.uk
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: legislation.gov.uk^[2]
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

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