

# Farmer fined following death of worker

A Gloucestershire farmer has been fined after the shepherdess he employed was killed in a quad bike crash.

Laura Simmons, was working alone on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2023, spraying weed killer along fence lines, using the all-terrain vehicle (ATV) at a farm in Charlton Abbots near Cheltenham.

The overloaded quad bike overturned. The 22-year-old was found by a jogger several hours later.

Laura, described by her mother as “lively, caring and adventurous,” died from fatal spine injuries. An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the ATV overturned due to an overloaded front rack, uneven tyre pressure, unstable load from lack of baffles in the spray tank and the potential for the spray lance to be used during movement.



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Toby Baxter failed to provide suitable equipment, ensure pre-use checks were conducted, implement a system to fill the spray tank, formally train his employees and properly assess the risks.

Laura’s mother paid tribute to her daughter from Shetland, saying: “She was a lively person who loved animals, was very caring, was a hard worker, was plucky, intelligent, practical, adventurous and she had a beautiful smile.”

HSE guidelines emphasise that safety checks for ATVs must include checking tyre pressures, which are crucial for vehicle stability. Even a small 1 psi difference can cause dangerous control problems. Proper ATV operation requires appropriate training, suitable helmets, and careful route planning. The risk of overturn is significantly higher when carrying loads that destabilise the vehicle, especially on uneven terrain or slopes as these conditions require reduced loads and increased caution.

[Guidance on safe use of all-terrain vehicles \(ATVs\) in agriculture and forestry](#) can be found on HSE website.

Toby Baxter, of Chedworth pleaded guilty to breaching regulation 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety At Work Act 1974. He was fined £1,000 and ordered to pay £6161.72 costs at a hearing at Cheltenham Magistrates Court on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Emily O'Neill said: "This was a tragic incident, and a much-loved young woman has lost her life. It could have easily been avoided with the right controls in place.

"We found several failures, so Mr Baxter's previous suggestion that Laura was a victim of 'unfortunate circumstances' is, frankly, offensive.

"This prosecution highlights ongoing safety concerns in the agricultural sector, which remains one of Britain's most dangerous industries for workers. Proper equipment, training and risk assessment are essential to protect workers."

The prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Arfaq Nabi and supported by paralegal officer Rebecca Foreman.

## Notes to Editors

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We are dedicated to protecting people and places, and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. 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 can be found [here](#).
5. Guidance on safe use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) in agriculture and forestry can be found [here](#).