This pack you will help you to:

- Identify hazardous manual handling activities
- Explain the steps necessary to assess and control risks
- Describe safe lifting techniques
About this pack

Objectives

When you have completed this pack you should be familiar with the manual handling regulations and how they apply to animal care businesses. This pack will help you to:

- Identify hazardous manual handling activities.
- Explain the steps necessary to assess and control risks.
- Describe safe lifting techniques.

This pack is also relevant to the following level 3 units:

- **Undertake and Review Work Related Experience in Land-based Industries**, Outcome 3: Be able to undertake a work-based experience in the environmental and land-based industry
- **Undertake animal handling and safe working**, Outcome 1: Be able to handle and restrain animals

Links to other packs

This is one in a series of learning packs, each tackling an important aspect of health and safety in animal care businesses. They are:

- Managing health & safety
- Risk assessment
- Accidents in animal care businesses
- COSHH in animal care businesses
- Manual handling in animal care businesses
- Using veterinary medicines safely

Each pack contains several activities which ask you to think the topic through or to apply it to an organisation you know of. In some cases you may be able to work on these activities with other people in your group.
What are the risks from manual handling?

Manual handling covers any task that involves lifting, lowering, carrying, twisting, pushing and pulling a load by hand. Doing these tasks incorrectly causes a large number of musculoskeletal injuries and can result in pain, time off work and sometimes permanent disablement. All these activities are governed by the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended in 2002). In essence the regulations require employers to avoid undertaking hazardous manual handling and to assess and reduce the risks from such handling where it cannot be avoided.

Activity

Give examples of activities in an organisation you know that involve manual handling:

How may they be hazardous?

Think of things that involve:

- Lifting or lowering
- Carrying
- Twisting
- Pushing
- Pulling
Controlling the risks

The regulations lay down a hierarchy of control measures. Employers must follow these three steps.

Avoid if possible

Avoid hazardous manual handling operations where reasonably practicable. Does the load have to be moved at all? If it does, could the task be fully mechanised? If it is not possible to avoid the hazardous manual handling then you must assess the activities and take appropriate steps to reduce the risk of injury.

Assess the risks

Assess adequately the hazardous operations that cannot be avoided. This involves considering risk factors, such as the:

- Task (e.g. the handler’s posture, carrying distances, whether it involves pushing or pulling, stooping, bending or twisting, etc)
- Load (e.g. shape, size, weight, difficult to grasp)
- Working environment (e.g. cramped environment, obstructions that hinder the work, poor weather or lighting, etc)
- Individual capability (e.g. is unusual strength required?)
- Other factors (e.g. the use of protective clothing, etc)

Unless it is very simple the assessment should be recorded.

Reduce the risks

Reduce the risk of injury as far as is reasonably practicable. A good assessment will identify the underlying cause(s) of the problem. This is the starting point for your improvements. For example:

- Can you mechanise the task to eliminate or reduce any manual handling?
- If the load is bulky or heavy it may be possible to break it into smaller quantities.
- If the handler has to adopt an awkward posture, you may be able to rearrange the task or change the system of work.
- Provide and use handling aids.
- Staff are likely to require training in safe lifting techniques to complement other measures.

Remember: mechanical handling can remove the need for physical effort and eliminate the risk of injury. This should be the first consideration.
The flowchart below sets out the key stages in assessing risks from manual handling.

Is there a risk of injury in the manual handling operation?

Yes

Could you automate or mechanise the operation

Yes

Does some risk remain?

No

Carry out assessment

Determine measures to reduce the risk of injury as far as possible

Implement the measures

Is the risk of injury sufficiently reduced?

Yes

Review if conditions change

No

Yes
Activity

Identify a task that involves manual handling. Using this checklist, tick whether you think each item is low, medium or high risk, and note any specific problems. Then suggest any possible remedial actions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions to consider</th>
<th>Low risk</th>
<th>Med risk</th>
<th>High risk</th>
<th>Specific problems</th>
<th>Remedial action</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the task involve:</td>
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<td>• holding loads away from the trunk?</td>
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<td>• twisting?</td>
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<td>• stooping?</td>
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<td>• long carrying distances?</td>
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<td>• strenuous pushing or pulling?</td>
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<td>Are the loads:</td>
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<td>• heavy?</td>
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<td>• bulky or unwieldy?</td>
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<td>• difficult to grasp?</td>
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<td>• unstable?</td>
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<td>Consider the working environment:</td>
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<td>• restrictions on posture?</td>
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<td>• poor ground conditions?</td>
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<td>• variations in level/slopes?</td>
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<td>• adverse weather/wind?</td>
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<td>• poor lighting?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consider individual capability – does the job:</td>
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<td>• require unusual strength?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• pose a risk to those with a health problem?</td>
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<td>• require special information or training?</td>
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</table>

Suggest ways of reducing the risk, in order of priority:

1  3
2  4
Safe lifting techniques

Good technique is a valuable addition to other risk control measures but it requires training and practice. The following list, based on research carried out for HSE, illustrates some important points which are relevant to a two-handed symmetrical lift i.e. a lift using both hands that takes place in front of and close to the body. This is not a substitute for other risk reduction measures such as lifting aids, or improvements to the system of work.

1. **Think before handling/lifting.** Plan the lift. Can you use handling aids? Where will you place the load? Will you need help? Remove obstructions. For a long lift, consider resting the load mid-way on a table or bench to change grip.

2. **Adopt a stable position.** Your feet should be apart with one leg slightly forward to maintain balance. Move the feet if necessary during the lift to maintain a stable posture. Avoid tight clothing.

3. **Get a good hold.** Where possible hug the load as close as possible to the body.

4. **Start in a good posture** – at the start of the lift, slight bending of the back, hips and knees, as in the picture on the left, is preferable to either fully flexing the back (stooping) or fully flexing the hips and knees (squatting).

5. **Don’t flex the back any further when lifting.**

6. **Keep the load close to the waist.** Keep the heaviest side of the load next to the body.

7. **Avoid twisting the back or leaning sideways.** Keep shoulders level and facing in the same direction as the hips. Turn by moving the feet.

8. **Keep the head up when handling.** Look ahead, as in the picture on the right, not down at the load.

9. **Move smoothly,** don’t jerk or snatch the load.

10. **Don’t lift or handle more than can be easily managed.**

11. **Put down, then adjust.** If necessary, put the load down and slide it into position.
Activity

Think about the following activities. What could you do to reduce the risk of injury in each case?

- Carrying large packs of dog food

- Lifting a large dog onto a table in a vet’s surgery

- Moving heavy cages in a pet shop
Answers to activities

Activity on Page 3

Here are some of the activities that may involve lifting, carrying, twisting, pushing, pulling, etc:

• Stacking or moving bales.
• Lifting or carrying sacks and other containers.
• Moving heavy cages.
• Working closely with animals – for example, carrying a dog.
• Repairing buildings.
• Carrying large packs of dog food.
• Maintaining fences and hedges.

Activity on Page 8

In all cases, you can reduce the risk of injury by lifting carefully, following the key points on the previous page. Some specific ideas:

• Keep the load manageable – it’s better to make more trips than to do your back in.
• Work as a team – heavy jobs are sometimes best tackled by people working together.
• Think about what you’re doing – try to avoid twisting as you lift.

Resources and further reading

You will find a number of useful HSE publications dealing with manual handling listed below:

• Manual Handling: Solutions you can handle – HSG115 (1994)

You can download copies from the HSE website at www.hse.gov.uk. Some publications are also available for purchase via the website or by post or telephone from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 6FS Tel 01787 881165.
Knowledge quiz

1. What are the three stages that an employer should go through to help fulfil their legal obligations for manual handling?
   a) 
   b) 
   c) 

2. What are the four key areas to consider when assessing manual handling operations?
   a) 
   b) 
   c) 
   d) 

3. Suggest four aspects of a manual handling task that can make it hazardous:
   a) 
   b) 
   c) 
   d) 

4. Suggest three things you can do to help reduce the risk of injury and musculoskeletal disorders:
   a) 
   b) 
   c) 

5. List three key stages that form part of a safe lifting technique
   a) 
   b) 
   c)
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