



## Awareness of Fragile roofs and Asbestos

Work on roofs can be dangerous and in agriculture 1 in 20 reported injuries were as the result of falling from or through a fragile roof. Even work of a short nature to do a quick repair needs to be planned.

### What to look out for.

Many agricultural buildings are steel frame, wide span buildings with fibre-cement roofs (the old type may contain asbestos but modern roofing should not post 1999).

These roofs are fragile, as they will not support the weight of a person on it. Warning signs should be displayed advising staff and third parties of any fragile roofs.

Roofs made from other materials may be also classed as a fragile and it depends on a number of factors such as: -

- The material thickness
- The span between the supports
- Age of the material
- Number and quality of fixings
- The design and strength of the purlins – the metal may have corroded
- Don't forget roof lights are fragile within a steel roof.

LKL staff should not carry out any work on roofs, it is best to engage a contractor with experience who will plan and risk assess the work and use equipment and safe systems to prevent falls.

Examining roof work that needs to be done is best from proper access equipment such as a scaffold tower or a telescopic handler with a purpose made fully integrated people carrier that is CE marked. The integrated platform should have controls that are interlinked to the truck controls, so that operation is from the platform only. A tilt trip mechanism should be fitted.

Training is required to use this equipment.

### Asbestos

Asbestos can be found in many farm buildings in the roof sheeting, wall cladding and guttering. The asbestos cement contains about 10-15% asbestos fibres imbedded within a cement structure. This material was often used as roofing as whilst it absorbs water it doesn't let it through. Asbestos cement in good condition should release no fibres and can be left in situ.

When it becomes old and deteriorated it can be dusty and release dangerous fibres into the air if moved or broken up.

Be aware that tasks such as clearing guttering may lead to accidental exposure to asbestos fibres if not done properly. The guttering itself may contain asbestos or asbestos fibres may have washed down into the guttering from fibre cement roof sheets. (The HSE has produced guidance for this operation - see: [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/a10.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/a10.pdf).)

The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 requires employers to take safety precautions to prevent exposure to asbestos fibres. In most cases a specialist contractor will be required to be engaged to carry out any work with asbestos involving repair, removal or cleaning work. Risk assessments are required and safety precautions and safe systems of work such as guarding the area of work, wearing the correct PPE, especially masks, keeping the material wet, not using power tools, disposing of the waste correctly and tidying the site and following work at height precautions will be needed.