

NEWS LETTER

LEPTOSPIROSIS study

WORK INJURY?

The Union is aware of several instances where the employer is challenging whether or not an injury occurred in the workplace.

Workers need to ensure that they report ANY INCIDENT, no matter how trivial it may seem as this greatly enhances your chances of having fewer problems gaining cover and entitlements.

REPORT! REPORT! REPORT!

**WORK DEATH
TOLL**
for the year starting
July 2008
(SOURCE—Safeguard
Magazine)

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The union is supporting a study into Leptospirosis being conducted through Massey University with various other stakeholders.

The study involves volunteers from the workplace having blood tests. The overall strategy is to determine a range of issues such as how many new infections occur, who has a higher/lower risk of contracting the disease, are the rates any different when processing cattle/deer/sheep, can you get infected and diseased twice, and so on.

At the moment Silver Fern Farms, Takapau has been part of the study. It is hoped to widen the research area to include Pacific beef in Hastings, Bernard Mathews in Gisborne and some other sheds who have yet to indicate their willingness to take part. This will give a wide range of species as well—sheep, beef, goats and deer.

Workers would be sampled 5 times over a 2 year period starting April/May 2009 and the last sampling 2011. There will also be a questionnaire which will need personal data such as workers' names, addresses, age, gender,

ethnicity, previous disease.

Risk factors for infection will also be assessed, such as work-related issues (time in the industry, working position, species process) and any off-work activities (home slaughter, contact with animals, environmental contact, hunting, water sports etc).

Participants will receive a personal letter if they show a positive result, and while there are doctors involved in the study group to oversee results, members should be aware that they have the right to consult their own GP if they get one of these letters.

All information, which will be kept confidential by the researchers, will be destroyed after 3 years.

Leptospirosis is a debilitating disease and while making workers very sick, it can actually lead to death. Early diagnosis and treatment is essential. See your Union card for more information or contact your union delegate.

General Secretary—Dave Eastlake



Hi members!

It is with regret that I advise members of the recent sudden death of PAUL WINTRINGHAM. Paul was a long-standing Union Organiser in the Aotearoa Branch and his sudden death was shock to all who knew him. Paul was a strong advocate for workers and he will be greatly missed.

Sadly, ex-National Secretary A.J. "Blue" Kennedy and ex-President Rangi Paenga also passed away towards the end of last year.

We are well into the 2008/09 export season and things have been going pretty well so far, however all indications are that the effect of the predicted drop in stock numbers may not be too far away and I think we can expect seasonal lay-offs to commence sooner rather than later.

Last November's election resulted in a change of Government for our country, the elected National Party have in the past not been a party to favour workers conditions and wages. As yet very little industrial policy has been released by National so we are at present in the wait and see position, with stock numbers continuing to decline and the world-wide economic crisis deepening the last thing we need is tighter employment laws. Our Union, as affiliates to the Council of Trade Unions, will be doing all in our power to persuade Government not to interfere with current employment legislation.

On the brighter side, we have met with the CEO's of two of the major meat companies in the last week and they are very upbeat on the future of our Industry.

During last off-season Silver Fern Farms embarked on a series of closures. These resulted in some 800 of our members losing their jobs, whilst redundancy payments helped those affected the loss of the jobs remains with us and future generations. The reality of it is these will not be the last closures in our unpredictable industry.

Alliance Group have purchased the Levin Meats Plant previously a non-union site, we can now say welcome to our members at Levin. Let's hope the rebuilding plans there come to fruition and you can look forward to lengthy involvement with the Union and the meat industry.

To the rest of our members, all the best for a good year!

**DAVE EASTLAKE,
GENERAL SECRETARY**

SERIOUS HARM - definition being reviewed

The definition of serious harm under the Health & Safety in Employment Act 1992 is being reviewed. Currently there are six types of injuries that can constitute serious harm, the proposed changes seek to include a more expansive range.

The proposed new definition would cover three separate categories of harm : Trauma injury (physical harm arising from a single accident or event, and defined by the degree of physical incapacity); Acute illness or injury (caused by exposure to specific workplace hazards, and requiring treatment by a medical practitioner); chronic or serious occupational illness or injury (being physical or mental harm requiring hospital admission or in-patient surgery, or able to be confirmed by a specialist medical diagnosis).

Please note this is only a draft at this stage, any changes to the current Act should be known by the end of April 2009.



Health & Safety DVD

The Meat Industry Health & Safety Forum has been working on a generic DVD on meat processing health and safety. The DVD is to be used to compliment an organisation's induction process and features generic health and safety issues such as working with hot water, slips/trips and falls, as well as illnesses such as Leptospirosis and Campylobacter.

The DVD contains helpful wellness and fitness tips along with early reporting advice for injury prevention. The DVD, fronted by comedian Mike King, is aimed to be released sometime in April this year.

The Meat Industry Forum is made up of Union, employer, ACC, Department of Labour representatives.



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Bits 'n' Pieces/Odds 'n' Sods

- Got a Safe Behaviour Programme operating at your workplace, or maybe your boss is talking about bringing one in? Remember these systems can only work if they are part of a comprehensive safety management system, they must include observing managers/supervisors/team leaders. Does the plant management meet with employees to discuss health & safety issues, do they respond quickly to safety concerns? Is the system more about blaming for faults or resolving issues? Contact your Union organiser if you are unsure about this type of system.
- Trial period for employees—the National Government passed the Employment Relations Amendment Bill on 12 December 2008. This means that an employer and employee can enter into an agreement that, for the specified and agreed number of days but no more than 90 calendar days, the employer can dismiss the employee without the employee being able to take a personal grievance for reasons of unjustified dismissal. From 1 March 2009 a new employer can provide you with an offer of employment which includes a trial period.
- An employer and employee may agree to a trial period ONLY if the employee has not previously been employed by the employer.
- The trial period only applies for employers who employ 19 or fewer employees. A trial period is voluntary and must be agreed to in writing in good faith.