Possible lung cancer risk to equestrians exposed

New research on the dangers of Respirable Crystalline Silica among equestrian workers has come to light, writes Dr Alan Hurley of Teagasc

**Key findings**

- Equestrian workers exposed to high levels of RCS have an increased risk of lung cancer.
- Keeping surfaces moist and using alternative footing materials such as sand can reduce RCS exposure.
- Equestrian workers need to be informed about the risks associated with RCS exposure.

**Future research**

Occupational cancer is the leading cause of work-related deaths in the EU, and further research is required to characterise RCS exposures and other potential airborne hazards created as a result of using different footing materials.

**NOTE:** The paper entitled ‘Occupational Exposures in an Equestrian Centre to Respirable Dust and Respirable Crystalline Silica’ by Dr Coggins and her team has been published in September 2019 in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health (https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16173226).

**Occupational Exposure Limit Value (OELV)** is the maximum permissible concentration of a chemical agent in the air at the workplace to which workers may be exposed, in relation to an eight-hour or a 15-minute reference period.

In practice, exposure levels should be maintained well below the OELV and should always be as low as reasonably achievable, this is particularly important for carcinogenic RCS.

Further information on OELVs and RCS can be obtained from the Health and Safety Authority.

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