

Farmer's Lung Disease in a cohort of British Agricultural Workers.

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Background

- Farmer's Lung Disease (FLD) is the oldest known form of hypersensitivity pneumonitis and remains one of the most commonly reported occupational causes in Europe.
- Despite this, there is very little recent data from British farm workers.

Aims and objectives

- The aim of this study was to provide novel data on the prevalence and demographic risk factors of FLD in a large cohort of British farm workers.

Methods

- Farm workers were identified from the baseline survey of the PIPAH cohort (Prospective Investigation of Pesticide Applicators' Health).
- All workers who reported ever having lived or worked on a farm were included in the study.
- The demographics of workers, who self-reported a doctor diagnosis of FLD, were compared to the remainder of the cohort.

Results

- Questionnaire data was available for 5115 current or former farmers, representing a cumulative total of over 210,000 years of farming practice.
- 26 farmers self-reported a diagnosis of FLD, representing a cohort prevalence of ~5 per 1000.
- Demographic data for farmers with and without FLD are shown in Table 1.
- Median age of FLD diagnosis was 35 (IQR 25-43, range 16-62).
- Median latent period between first farm exposure and development of FLD was 28 years (IQR 20-42).

Conclusion

- The prevalence of FLD in this British cohort (representing over 1% of British farmers) was in keeping with that reported from other countries.
- Age of diagnosis was very variable, with the majority of those affected having never smoked.
- Although most had worked on a mixture of farm types, workers with FLD were more likely to report only having lived on an animal versus cereal production farms.

Table 1 Characteristics of study participants

Characteristic	Doctor diagnosed farmer's lung		p-value
	No (n = 5089)	Yes (n = 26)	
Gender			
Female	83 (1.7)	0 (0)	0.650
Male	4953 (98.4)	26 (100)	
Age (years)	54.1 (46.0, 62.7)	61.9 (50.5, 70.0)	0.003
Type of farm lived on			
Animal production only	152 (3.5)	4 (16.7)	0.004
Crop production only	822 (19.1)	1 (4.2)	
Mixed farm & combinations	3349 (77.4)	19 (79.2)	
Years lived or worked on a farm	44.6 (28.4, 55.5)	50.0 (34.0, 65.8)	0.195
Smoking status			
Never smoked	2994 (64.6)	17 (68.0)	0.902
Former smoker	1219 (26.3)	7 (28.0)	
Current smoker	425 (9.2)	1 (4.0)	

For categorical variables, data are counts with column percentages in parentheses.

For continuous variables, data are medians with interquartile range in parentheses.