



ALEC SMITH RURAL BUSINESS ADVISOR

Alec Smith has been with Sentry since July 2009, starting off in farm management as a Trainee Manager in Hertfordshire and then Surrey. He was then an Assistant Farm Manager in Suffolk for two years before evolving over the last 4 years into his role as a Rural Business Advisor. Alec has a very varied role within the Advisory business that currently involves management of an estate in Ireland, farm business management, farm consultancy and overseeing the Sentry Associate Members. All this keeps him on his toes and his mind very active!

HEALTH AND SAFETY

As part of my role I carry out annual Health and Safety audits of around a dozen external clients a year. This essentially makes sure they have everything in place to help protect their employees, themselves and their business from injury, illness and prosecution. Many of the clients take advantage of their Associate Membership hours for this service, which is based on our own internal peer to peer review system.

I tend to find many businesses have the fundamentals in place but are lacking the evidence and documentation on farm reflecting this; if they are ever inspected this will be a key feature that is looked for.

There are 3 aspects to why we manage health and safety in our businesses:

1. Moral - avoidance of death, serious injury, loss of ability to work and impact on other workers and the business.
2. Legal - it's the law, with serious penalties for breaches such as imprisonment and corporate manslaughter.
3. Financial - legal fees, lost production time, HSE fees or material damage to name a few.

It is important that every business has a health and safety policy in place that is reviewed and used regularly, not only to protect their staff but to avoid prosecution and financial penalties. The health and safety policy needs to be in a written form if the business has over 5 people under instruction on the farm, including family members.

We have had several clients come to us with no policy in place and have used our help and assistance to set up a useable health and safety policy on their business at a reasonable rate. Many of these businesses would not have had a health and safety policy in place if it wasn't for our involvement. We will also follow it up with annual health and safety reviews to make sure everything is fully implemented and updated following the initial review.

