Farming Dust Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. Farming dust can come from many different sources. Organic dust can come from crops, silage, animal wastes and bedding. Molds, pollen and animal dander can occur naturally and vary in concentrations due to weather, seasons, or ventilation in indoor environments.
2. When you breathe in farm dust, the particles can lodge in your lungs and cause health effects. The smaller the dust particle, the deeper it can penetrate into your lung tissue. If you smoke or have an existing respiratory illness, you may be more susceptible to dust exposures. Short-term health effects may include sneezing, coughing, and difficulty breathing.
3. Long-term, chronic effects from dust exposure may include lung congestion, chronic bronchitis and pneumonia, and different dust sensitivities and allergies. Chronic dust exposure can lead to serious respiratory diseases such as asthma, emphysema, and farmer’s lung.
4. Grain dust is the dust produced from the harvesting, drying, handling, storage or processing of barley, wheat, oats, maize or rye and includes any contaminants or additives within the dust (eg. bacteria, endotoxin, fungal spores, insects and insect debris, pesticide residues).
5. Health risks are also likely to arise from exposure to dusts produced by other types of grain, eg. rice, sorghum, pulses (such as soya bean), peas and various oilseeds (such as rapeseed).
6. Respiratory disease (a disease affecting our lungs and breathing tubes) is a major occupational health risk, for example, in agriculture the number of occupational asthma cases is double the national average.
7. Workers with occupational respiratory disease may develop permanent breathing problems, becoming disabled, and unable to work.

STATS

- Farm dust leads to 17,900 U.S. deaths per year, study finds
- More than 17,000 annual deaths attributable to farm dust across the United States, according to research published today in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.
- Animal agriculture is the worst emitter, researchers say, responsible for 80 % of deaths from pollution related to food production. Gases associated with manure and animal feed produce small, lung-irritating particles capable of drifting hundreds of miles. These emissions now account for more annual deaths than pollution from coal power plants. Yet while pollution from power plants, factories and vehicles is restricted under the Clean Air Act, there is less regulation of air quality around farms.

- Ammonia is the one that has the greatest impact on mortality," Hill said. His analysis suggests that ammonia emissions contribute to about 12,400 deaths per year.
- Agriculture is a major source of farm dust, killing an estimated 17,900 people in the U.S. every year, according to a new study.
  130 % increase in premature deaths and a 300 % increase in hospital admissions attributable to fine dust exposure.
- Moulds tend to grow in stored hay, grain, or silage when moisture content is high (30 %) and storage areas are poorly ventilated.