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Prevalence of work-related respiratory symptoms in Iranian farmers

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Abstract

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Background: Animal exposure may be an important trigger for work-related symptoms among farmers. Objective: To estimate the prevalence of work-related respiratory symptoms (WRS) in sheep breeders and agricultural farmers and to determine work-related risk factors. Methods: A family doctor used a questionnaire to interview a cohort of 173 farmers comprised of 127 sheep breeders and 46 agricultural farmers in the rural area of Rokh (northeast Iran). The questionnaire pertained to recurrent wheezing, cough, breathlessness or chronic phlegm while at work (these symptoms define WRS), flu-like illness and physician-diagnosed asthma. Results: There were 71 subjects (41%) with WRS: 10 of 46 agricultural farmers (21.7%) and 61 of 127 sheep breeders (48.0%). The proportions of sheep breeders with wheezing (16.5%), asthma (14%), cough (29%), breathlessness (31.5%) and flu-like illness (38%) were higher than in agricultural farmers. A significant dose-response relationship among the daily hours worked with animals, the number of animals and the prevalence of symptoms was established for sheep farmers. Sheep shearing and the use of pesticide were associated with an increased risk of wheezing and phlegm. Conclusions: The results suggest that sheep farmers in general have higher rates of work-related symptoms than agricultural farmers. The severity of work-related symptoms will increase with an increase in frequency of animal contact; therefore, these results may underestimate the impact of this exposure. © 2006 Pulsus Group Inc. All rights reserved.

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Author keywords

Asthma; Flu-like illness; Pesticide; Sheep breeders; Work-related respiratory symptoms

Indexed Keywords

EMTREE drug terms: pesticide

EMTREE medical terms: adult; agricultural worker; article; asthma; cohort analysis; controlled study; coughing; disease severity; dose response; dyspnea; female; flu like syndrome; frequency analysis; human; interview; Iran; major clinical study; male; nose irritation; occupational disease; occupational exposure; pesticide spraying; phlegmon; prevalence; priority journal; questionnaire; recurrent disease; respiratory tract disease; rural area; sheep farming; wheezing

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