

Landowner fined £15,000 after public attacked by COWS

18 August 2023

Following an investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Sir Charles Hobhouse, a Wiltshire landowner, has pleaded guilty to breaching section 3(2) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 - failing to ensure that risks to members of the public were controlled.

During summer 2021, members of the public were attacked by cows in two separate incidents on Mr Hobhouse's land, whilst following public footpaths.

The first incident resulted in serious injuries, including a fractured shoulder and broken ribs. Mr Hobhouse was formally instructed to implement controls to prevent anything similar from happening again.

However, only a few weeks later, a second member of the public, also using public footpaths across Mr Hobhouse's land, was attacked by cows, resulting in concussion, dislocated shoulders, broken ribs and broken vertebrae.

Mr Hobhouse pleaded guilty in May 2023 and was fined £15,000 and ordered to pay costs of £8,000.

Cow attacks are not uncommon in the UK and whilst rare, the HSE has said that there are on average four or five fatalities in the UK every year, with that figure reaching 11 between 2020 and 2021.

Landowners are encouraged to review their statutory health and safety obligations and ensure appropriate measures are always in place where livestock are likely to come into contact with members of the public. In particular, care should be taken in reviewing any public footpaths that cross your land and ensuring that only appropriate livestock are placed in or near those areas. Dog walkers are always encouraged to keep their dogs on leads when walking in the countryside.

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