

Volunteers on B.C. Ranches

Frequently Asked Questions

How can you tell if the person helping on your ranch is a worker or volunteer? The answer differs, depending on the circumstances, so WorkSafeBC makes every determination on a case-by-case basis. The following frequently asked questions may help you understand some of the factors that are considered in determining whether someone is a worker or a volunteer.

If you have more questions or need clarification on whether someone is a worker or a volunteer, we encourage you to call the Employer Service Center at 604.224.6181 or toll-free at 1.888.922.2768.

Who is considered a volunteer?

For workers' compensation purposes, a volunteer is an individual performing services of his or her own free will, and who does not receive compensation, money, wages or benefits, or any financial or other incentive or motivation for volunteering.

What constitutes wages or benefits?

Wages or benefits can be money, or anything of value that is given in lieu of compensation.

Is a person considered a worker if he or she helps me with branding for a day, doesn't receive wages, but is provided with a meal?

In most instances, no. The lunch or dinner is not of significant value for the assistance provided.

What happens if a volunteer helping me on my farm or ranch gets hurt?

If the person is determined to be a volunteer, they are not entitled to benefits from WorkSafeBC.

Can I register for short-term coverage for people who show up to work at my place occasionally but are perhaps not covered by WorkSafeBC, like a hoof trimmer?

If the business you hire is not registered or not making its payments to WorkSafeBC, you could be liable for insurance premiums in connection with the work or service being performed on your behalf. That's why you should always obtain a clearance letter before a business or contractor starts working for you, and again before you make your final payment. You can get clearance letters online at worksafebc.com, on the Insurance page, under "Quick Links."



I'm already registered as an employer, but I'm not sure if I'll hire workers or for how long. What do I need to do?

If you're already registered as an employer, all you need to do is report all workers' payroll at the end of the year – even if a worker was only hired for a few days.

Is a family member considered a worker if he or she helps out on the farm and does not receive wages, but is fed and housed?

Generally, a family member who is not receiving any form of payment will not be considered a worker.

Does this change if the family member receives something in return for his or her work, such as half a beef or hay?

Because the family member is receiving payment in the form of beef or hay, it may change the employment relationship and that person may now be considered a worker and not a volunteer. In a situation such as this, it would be best to call Employer Service Centre at 604.244.6181 or toll-free at 1.888.922.2768 to help determine if the person is a worker or a volunteer.

Will my personal liability coverage for my ranch or farm cover volunteers that work for me?

You would have to speak with your insurance provider to determine what your insurer covers.

Before you have someone perform services for you that you believe to be voluntary, you may want to contact the WorkSafeBC Employer Service Centre at 604.244.6181 or toll-free at 1.888.922.2768. You can also visit worksafebc.com/insurance for more information.