

MAFES Dawg Tracks



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Safety Tips: Handling Cattle



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There have been several reports of accidents and injuries related to cattle handling in the last few years. These incidents are caused by several factors. It could be from inadequate yard or lot design, lack of training by handlers, unsafe work practices, and the weight, sex, stress factor and temperament of animals.

Following are some tips relating to handling cattle that could save an injury in the future:

Spot the Hazard-

- Check prior records to identify areas that most likely cause the most accidents.
- Consider situations that cause stress and injury to handlers and stock.
- Consider the sex, weight and temperament of the animals.
- Check potential hazards and safety advantages of stock facilities, including mechanical aids and work layout.
- Consider the amount of training required before a person can adequately handle stock.

Assess the Risk-

- Using prior records check to see which work situations are linked to the injuries.
- Discuss safety concerns with the handlers in regard to their various work assignments.
- Check each of the identified hazards in relation to their likelihood and severity of injury.
- Assess proposed safeguards and safety procedures for other hazards.

Following are some suggestions for improving safe cattle handling:

- Try to plan ahead. Prepare and communicate safe work practices. Get help if necessary.
- Wear appropriate clothing and footwear and a hat for sun protection.
- Make use of the facilities and aids, head rails, brandling cradles, whips, drafting canes, etc.
- Know the limitations of yourself and others—work within those limitations.
- Respect the cattle—they have the strength and speed to cause injury.

Facilities and Conditions-

- Yards and sheds should be large and strong enough to handle the type of cattle involved.
- Good lot design is an aid for cattle flow. Avoid blind and sharp corners. Ensure that gates are well positioned
- Keep facilities in good shape – free from protruding nails.

- Try to maintain non-slippery conditions on the floor.
- Cattle are more unpredictable in cold and windy weather.
- Where cattle need restraining use crushes, head rails, cradles, etc.

The Stock-

- Approach cattle quietly, and make sure that they are aware of your presence.
- Hazards vary according to age, sex, breed, weight, horn status, temperament and training of the animals.
- Bulls are more aggressive during mating season and extremely dangerous when fighting. When you have multiple bulls, they should be separated in different pens.
- Cows and heifers are more likely to charge when they have a young calf at their side.
- Isolated cattle become stressed and are more likely to charge when approached.

Cattle Yarning-

- Avoid working in overstocked lots. The risk of being trampled or crushed is greater.
- While drafting cattle through a gate, work from one side or with one foot on the gate, in case the mob forces the gate back suddenly.
- Be careful when cattle are in the chute for vaccinations or tagging. A sudden movement by the animal could crush your arms against railings or posts.
- When moving cattle through the chute, work from one side to avoid getting knocked down when an animal is trying to go through.

Kicking and Butting-

- To avoid kick injuries, attempt to work either outside of the animal's kicking range or up close to the side, where kicking damage would be minimal.
- When working on an animal's head, use head bails to restrain it from sudden movement forwards or backwards.

Stud Cattle-

- When working with stud cattle, train animals to accept intensive handling through gradual familiarization, such as clipping, grooming or washing.
- When leading an animal on a halter, refrain from wrapping the rope around your hand or arm. If the animal gets out of control, you could be dragged. Bulls to be sold should be fitted with a nose ring, so when led they could be held up by the nose lead.