

# MAFES Dawg Tracks



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Safety Tips: Animal Handling



Farmers, ranchers and farm workers can easily be injured by livestock. In fact, we have had a bad one or two during my time with the University. Cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and dogs, like some humans, can be unpredictable. It will behoove one and all to treat animals with caution when you are working with them.

Male and female animals are more unpredictable and aggressive during mating season. Make sure that your employees that work with the animals are trained to recognize the different temperament of the livestock, as they have varying personalities slightly resembling us humans.

**RISK ASSESSMENT-** Take a little time and assess the possible risks involved:

- Walk through the handling areas and look for potential hazards like broken latches on gates, broken posts and restraining equipment.
- Recheck past injury records that might help you flag some possible problem areas that could be improved.
- Discuss potential safety problems with family members and employees.
- One person should be trained in first aid/CPR, in case of an accident where first aid or CPR might be needed.
- Remember that inexperienced workers are more susceptible to injuries, sometimes even after they are trained.

## **GENERAL SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE YARD SAFETY-**

- ✓ Yards, crushes, cradles, and sheds should be suitable in size and strength for the animals being handled.
- ✓ Avoid blind corners and sharp turns in designing the working facility.
- ✓ Keep the walkways and laneways dry and non-slip wherever possible.
- ✓ Make sure that the gates, footholds, and access ways are well positioned.
- ✓ Keep all the equipment in good repair, gates hung and moving, latches working and hinges greases.

## **CATTLE HANDLING TIPS-**

- Make sure that the cattle know that you are approaching.
- Stay focused – cows may charge to protect their calves or if they are startled.
- When gathering or mustering cattle, if you have the space, separate the bulls from the cows.
- Make sure that there is sufficient for the cattle to move.
- Try to maintain a safe distance, put of kicking range of the cattle and not too close to their body.
- Use rails, crushes, and cradles to restrain the cattle when necessary.
- Dehorn your cattle.

**SAFETY IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY!**

**~Alert Today~~Alive Tomorrow~**

## **HORSE HANDLING TIPS-**

- Use appropriate riding equipment and keep it in good repair.
- Wear suitable protective clothing and wear a helmet.
- Exercise a horse before you get ready to mount and ride.
- Make sure that inexperienced riders aren't teamed up with aggressive or nervous horses.

## **PIG HANDLING TIPS-**

- Always keep the boars separated.
- Use a drafting board when moving boars.
- Use nose ropes and crushes to restrain pigs when necessary.
- Lifting a pig should be avoidable, but if you need to do so, sit it down facing away from you, pull it in close to your body and pick it up by its hind legs. Make sure that you lift it with your thigh muscles.

## **SHEEP HANDLING TIPS-**

- ❖ Plan herding in advance.
- ❖ Assume that rams will act unpredictably.
- ❖ Use suitably trained sheep dogs to control the herd.
- ❖ Lifting a sheep should be avoidable, but if you do, sit it down facing away from you, pull it close to your body and pick it up by its hind legs. Again lift it with your thigh muscles.
- ❖ When shearing, use a harness to support your back.

## **ANIMALS & HUMAN DISEASES-**

Many diseases can be transferred from animals to humans through contact with skin, wool, hair, blood, saliva, urine and fetal products. So remember these tips:

- Keep your animals updated with vaccinations.
- Get familiar with symptoms of animal diseases.
- Treat signs of illness immediately.
- Practice good personal hygiene – washing your hands frequently as needed and getting out of soiled clothing.
- Cover all cuts and open wounds before having contact with animals.
- If you do come in contact with animal saliva, urine, or blood, wash well with soap, water and antiseptic.

## **REMEMBER-**

- **Animals are unpredictable, especially during mating season.**
- **Keep all your facilities in good repair.**
- **Train employees adequately in the handling and temperament of the animals.**
- **Be careful and observant when visiting other folks' farms and their working facilities.**

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