

MAFES Dawg Tracks

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MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
MS AGRICULTURAL AND
FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION

Work Safely Around
Large Animals

Poor judgment, a lack of understanding, and sometimes carelessness, contribute to accidents involving livestock. We can avoid accidents when working with cattle or livestock in general, if we take time to:

- ~Evaluate our knowledge of animal behavior.
- ~After evaluation, practice safe handling livestock procedures.

LARGE ANIMALS CAN BE DANGEROUS-

- Each year, numerous farmers, farmworkers and children are seriously hurt or killed by large animals.
- These accidents result in injuries ranging from deep bruises to broken bones to being crushed or trampled.
- They also result in lost work days and costly medical bills.
- Many of you may feel comfortable around large animals because you've worked around them a long time. However, even animals you think you know can be hard to predict.
- Following are some reasons why animal-related accidents occur:
 - ~animals are sick, injured or stressed by heat.
 - ~animals become frightened or startled.
 - ~workers are overtired, in a hurry or distracted.
 - ~animals have been neglected, hit or otherwise abused in the past.
 - ~workers are inexperienced in handling large animals.
 - ~lighting is uneven or poor.
 - ~animal handling facilities are cluttered or overcrowded.

IMPORTANT ANIMAL HANDLING FACTS-

- ✓ Male animals are very dangerous. Stay away from them unless you have been specially trained to handle them.
- ✓ Be extra cautious around newborn animals. Their mothers are likely to be very protective.
- ✓ Swine, beef and dairy cattle have poor depth perception, which means they have trouble seeing at distances.
- ✓ Most animals are color blind but have very sensitive hearing. They can easily be spooked by loud noises and quick color changes.
- ✓ Cattle and horses cannot see what is directly behind them. Sudden movements are likely to spook them.
- ✓ Animals are "territorial" and are generally very comfortable in their pens or other areas where they spend most of their time. Forcing them to leave these areas disturbs them. It is advantageous not to alter their living conditions, if possible.

BE ALERT TO WARNING SIGNS-

Animals may exhibit certain warning signs indicating aggression or fear. These warnings signs include:

- raised or pinned ears
 - raised tail or raised hair on their back
 - bared teeth
 - pawing the ground
 - snorting or growling sounds
- Avoid trying to handle an animal exhibiting one of these warning signs.

MORE IMPORTANT SAFETY TIPS-

- ✓ Always dress appropriately when working with large animals. Wear good, sturdy shoes or boots and good quality cloth or leather gloves.
- ✓ Wear a dust/mist respirator if you're working in dusty conditions. If you have a question about respirators, check with your supervisor.
- ✓ Keep animal facilities as clean as possible. Don't let clutter accumulate. Check for protruding nails, sharp edges and other potential dangerous points.
- ✓ Be sure that there is adequate lighting with proper distribution.
- ✓ Animals can become frightened by bright lights and shadows.
- ✓ Always have an emergency escape route when you're working in close quarters around large animals.
- ✓ Be respectful of the animals. Be patient and calm with them. Don't prod them when they have nowhere to go.
- ✓ Move slowly but deliberately around animals. Avoid sudden movements and loud noises. Don't yell.
- ✓ Most large animals will kick in an arc starting toward the front and moving toward the back. Try to stay away from their kicking area.
- ✓ Avoid horseplay when working with large animals. Don't tease them and don't handle them when you're mad.

BASIC POINTS AS A REMINDER-

- Beef, swine, sheep and dairy animals are all colorblind.
- Cattle, horses and mules have a panoramic field of vision.
- Animals respond to the way they are treated by humans in past experience.
- Livestock are sensitive to noises and are frightened easily.
- Most animals are like us humans, they respond to calm, gentle and consistent handling.

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