

# MAFES Dawg Tracks

April 3, 2017



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™  
MS AGRICULTURAL AND  
FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION

*Safety Tips:  
Livestock Handling*

The agriculture industry ranks as one of the most dangerous of all American industries. In a recent survey, the National Safety Council (NSC) ranked beef cattle farms and dairy operations as number three and number four respectively of all agriculture-related businesses in terms of the rate of injuries per hours of work. Animals are involved in 17% of all farm injuries which is equal to the percentage of accidents involving farm machinery.

Experienced animal handlers will tell you that animals perform better when they are relaxed and tranquil, with their environment as comfortable as can reasonably be.

Animals in traumatic exposures or environments are more likely to over-react when there are sudden changes in their surroundings or unfamiliar happenings occur. Take extra precautions when animals are being medically treated, examined, loaded, moved, or any other handling operations.

Experienced cattlemen tell you that animals have the ability to communicate, even though they can't actually speak. Most animals have and will display the characteristics of fear, aggression, and contention. Experienced handlers will be conscious of these warnings, which are identified with:

- ~Raised pin ears
- ~Raised back hair
- ~Raised tail
- ~Bared teeth
- ~Pawing the ground and/or snorting

Most of your experienced cattlemen are familiar with good handling methods. But, for the benefit of newer employees who are involved with animals, the following tips may prove to be helpful, and, for experienced cattlemen, a review never hurts to help you stay focused:

- ✓ Most animals respond positively to routines involving calm, deliberate responses.
- ✓ Avoid loud noises and quick movements.
- ✓ Move slowly and deliberately around livestock.
- ✓ Touching animals gently can be more effective than bumping or shoving them.
- ✓ Respect rather than fear livestock. Breeding stock can be highly protective and sometimes irritable. Their disposition deteriorates with age. Old breeding stock can be cantankerous, deceptive, and unpredictable; also large enough to hurt you. Male animals should be considered dangerous at all times.
- ✓ If you are working in close quarters with livestock, always be sure to have an escape route.
- ✓ Be extra careful around strange or new animals and enforce strict security when visitors or strangers are in the close proximity of the area.

I've been told that animals will even respond favorably to relaxing talk, soft music, singing, and hand signals. My friends in another state play music in their milking parlors during the milking time.

## WORKING FACILITIES-

Many injuries can be traced back to inadequate facilities, equipment failures, poor buildings, and loading structures.

The conditions listed above can negatively affect everyday operations in production efficiencies and the risk of accidents to the livestock or the workers.

- Trip hazards like high doorsills, narrow alleys, uneven alleys, and walking surfaces should be avoided. A current study showed that 18% of all animal-related accidents result from falls.
- Concrete floors with rough floor surfaces and grooved walkways and alleyways are best for livestock.
- Good strong fencing and gates are critical for security. The chute walls should be solid (instead of fending) where possible and wide enough for the animals to pass, but not wide enough for them to turn around. The solid walls are for obvious reasons; the cattle will respond better and won't be able to balk from outside interferences.
- There should not be any protruding objects for livestock or humans to brush against or fall/run into and cause an injury.
- The area should have good lighting and diffused to prevent glare and shadows which tend to "spook" livestock.

Presently all of our cattle working facilities have been pretty much updated and have most of the items mentioned above.

## GENERAL SAFETY REMINDERS FOR LIVESTOCK HANDLING-

- Good housekeeping is essential for our personal safety, but it is just as important to protect our animals.
- Respect all animals. They may not hurt you on purpose, but their size and bulk can be dangerous.
- Keep children away from animals, particularly in livestock working areas.
- Limited security should be practiced where possible to prevent outside diseases from being brought in.
- Take extra care around male animals and "mommas" with newborn babies. They tend to be very protective of their young. Stay clear of "spooked animals."
- Keep the facilities in good condition. Lagoons and ponds should be fenced in for added security.

The tips discussed above offer good ideas on handling and maintaining facilities, etc. But the best methods, like in most

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BUT OUR WAY OF LIFE!  
BE ALERT<><><>BE SAFE  
BE ALIVE!***

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11/8/2016

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work environments, are to use good old “common sense” and to use the golden rule – treat your animals like you would like to be treated; with soft words and gentle actions.

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