

# Livestock Safety: Fact Sheet

## Livestock Safety

Farm livestock can be the source of injuries to farmers, their family members, and employees if precautions are not taken. Characteristics of livestock such as large size, panoramic field of vision, territorial instinct, skittish behavior, and poor depth perception can influence when and how incidents take place even with the most experienced herdsmen.

### Animal Behavior – Each characteristic influences animal-human interactions

- Livestock become skittish when their ordinary routines or familiar surroundings change.
- Animals have a social order and the leader may react if threatened.
- Domestic livestock, especially cattle and sheep, are herd animals. They may become agitated when isolated, will try to return to the group, and push humans out of the way in the process.
- Livestock detect people by their movement, which if sudden, may bolt.
- Many animals are color blind and have poor depth perception so they may balk or resist handling.

### Animals' Signs of Aggression – Be leery of these signs

- Raised or pinned ears
- Raised tail or hair on the back
- Bared teeth
- Snorting
- Pawing the ground

### Hazards Associated with Working with Farm Livestock

- Crushed against a wall or fence by large livestock
- Kicked by or stepped on
- Bitten in the process of handling temperamental animals
- Farmer's Lung and other respiratory related symptoms like bronchitis and pneumonia can be found among farmers who work with livestock.



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## Preventing Livestock Related Injuries

*A farmer's behavior can lead to safer atmosphere working with livestock*

- Livestock like a calm, quiet atmosphere. Be quiet and move slowly so the livestock does not get upset.
- Keep the livestock's routine similar so they don't balk at changes.
- When working with livestock, leave an escape route so you're not pinned by the animal.
- Approach animals quietly and from the side or front so you don't startle them.
- Animals respond best to gentle behavior of humans. Animals who have been slapped, chased, or mishandled will respond in an excited state.
- Take caution when around male livestock who are often territorial in nature.
- Maternal instinct takes over after the birth of an animal. Allow the baby to stay close to mother and take extra caution.

## Personal Protective Equipment

Many farm animals are large in size and often several times the weight of those working with them. Wearing proper clothing can help prevent injury if an unexpected human-animal interaction takes place.

- Sturdy and/or steel toed boots can prevent foot and ankle injuries if stepped on by a large animal.
- Non-skid soles can help prevent falls when around wet, icy, or manure laden floors.
- Leather or surgical gloves can protect from chemical, urine, and feces contamination as well as when vaccinating livestock.
- Respiratory masks protect farmers from inhaling dusts in confined buildings and moldy forages often associated with livestock operations. These masks can prevent lung related symptoms and diseases.
- Shoes can transmit diseases from one location to another. Clean shoes before going to another livestock operation.
- Equestrian helmets can protect the head if thrown from a horse.



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## Maintained Facilities and Transportation

- Falls account for a large number of animal-related injuries. Keep floor surfaces clean of water, manure, and other slippery substances.
- Some diseases can be transmitted from animals to humans. Draining and slotted floors allow for easy cleaning and elimination of chemicals and animal waste.
- Working around animal waste which contain bacteria means fencing, walls, and panels (especially those with nails and bolts which could be rusty) should be maintained. This could prevent infection of both animals and humans.
- Trailers used to move livestock need secure hitches, latches, chains, and hooks.

Farmer's family members are also at risk when around livestock. Children who are less experienced often do not have knowledge about safe behavior while working with animals. It is your responsibility to teach them safe behavior while around livestock.

## Suggested photo images:

- Several cattle
- Hogs in confinement building
- Farmer grooming horse

