

Wearing the Right Shoes

Objective: Students will be able to identify the characteristics of shoes needed for working around livestock.

Concept: Farm animals are often large and can weigh over a ton (2000 lbs.). If stepped on by a large animal, your feet could be badly hurt. The connection between having your feet unprotected and the resulting injury will help students make better decisions about the footwear they wear when doing chores.

Targeted Age: Elementary through high school

Materials:

- 1 open toed sandal
- 1 hard soled boot
- 1 tennis shoe
- 1 steel toed boot
- 4 hot dogs
- 4 wooden dowels 3/16" x 6"
- 4 plastic Ziploc bags
- Gentle horse or other large animal that will allow you to pick up and handle their legs

Insert a wooden dowel into the center of each hot dog. Slip each hot dog into a plastic bag. Place each plastic bag into the big toe area of each shoe.

Discuss the fact that the average adult horse or cow weighs 1000 lbs to 1500 lbs. When leading, an animal can easily step on your feet. Using a horse that is gentle and an adult who is experienced in working with horses, pick up the horse's front hoof. Place the shoe with the hot dog in it on the ground and allow the horse to place the hoof on top of the shoe. Repeat this with each shoe type.

Discuss the analogy of the hot dog and wood dowel to your own foot and bones and how the thicker the shoe the less damage to the hot dog.

Caution: Anytime large animals are in close proximity to children and youth, take extra precautions to keep them away from the animal. Draw a line or provide a fence between the animal and students. Do not allow students to walk within kicking distance of the horse. Adult leaders that are very familiar with horses should be the only ones doing this activity.

Note to Instructor: Be sure the chosen animal is gentle. This demonstration works well once, but caution should be taken not to frustrate the animal with repeated demonstrations, such as during a day camp where the same demonstration is done over and over for different groups of students.

Q: What farm animals are large?

A: Horses, cattle, sheep and hogs can all weigh many times more than children.

Q: What shoe characteristics would make them safe to wear around large animals?

A: Covering the toe with leather is a top priority. Steel toes are preferable, but not always available.

