

Work environment – Rural safety

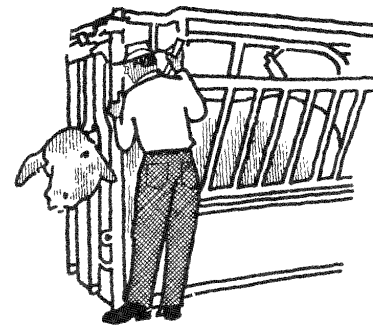
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Cattle handling >

This bulletin outlines some simple safety guidelines for those working in the rural industry and is one of a series on Rural Industry safety.

Consider the handler

- Plan ahead - consider safe work practices. Get assistance if necessary.
- Be suitably attired - wear protective footwear and a hat for protection from the sun.
- Make use of facilities and aids - headbails, branding cradles, whips, drafting canes, dogs etc.
- Know the limitations of yourself and other persons - work within those limitations.
- Respect cattle - they have the strength and speed to cause injury.
- Concentrate, be alert and try to anticipate an animal's reaction to a given situation.

**Consider the facilities and conditions**

- Yards and sheds need to be strong enough and of a size to match the cattle being handled.
- Good yard design assists the smooth flow of stock - avoid sharp, blind corners and ensure gates are well positioned.
- Keep facilities in good repair - free from protruding rails, bolts, wire, etc and free from rubbish.
- Where cattle need restraining, use crushes, headbails, cradles etc.
- Footholes and well placed gaps in yard fences are important for a hasty retreat.
- Try to maintain yards in a non-slippery state.
- Cattle are more unpredictable during cold windy weather.

Consider the stock

- Safety in cattle handling varies according to a number of factors - age, sex, breed, weight, horn status, temperament and training of the animals.
- A period of intensive handling in yards and tailing-out as weaners can make subsequent handling of mature animals easier.
- Bulls are more aggressive during the mating season and extremely dangerous when fighting. Separate into different yards where applicable.
- Cows and heifers are most likely to charge when they have a young calf at foot.
- Isolated cattle often become stressed and are likely to charge when approached.

putting safety first >



- Cattle with sharp horns are dangerous and dehorning is recommended where practicable. However, dehorned and polled cattle can still cause injury.

Consider the operation

- Avoid working in overstocked yards as you could be crushed or trampled.
- While drafting cattle through a gate work from one side to avoid being knocked down by an animal trying to go through.
- When working with cattle in a crush to vaccinate, apply tail tags, etc take care not to crush arms against rails or posts from sudden movement of stock.
- Approach cattle quietly and make sure they are aware of your presence.
- When closing a gate behind cattle in a crush or small yard, stand to one side or with one foot on the gate in case the mob forces the gate back suddenly.
- To avoid being injured from being kicked, attempt to work either outside the animal's kicking range or directly against the animal where the effect of being kicked will be minimised.
- In dairies there is a high risk of being kicked. Try to follow a regular routine so as not to alarm cows (eg placing cold water on their teats).
- Be careful when working on the head of an animal that it is restrained in a head bail because they can still move forward or backward suddenly.
- Care should be taken when using certain equipment such as brands or knives for castrating and bangtailing, etc.
- When working with stud cattle, train animals to accept intensive handling through gradual familiarisation - grooming, washing, clipping, etc.
- When leading cattle on a halter, never wrap the lead rope around your arm or hand. If the animal gets out of control you could be dragged.
- Bulls should be fitted with a nose ring. When being led, their heads should be held up by the nose lead.
- Be aware of the possibility of contracting diseases such as Leptospirosis and Q Fever when working with animals. These diseases are transmitted through contact with blood, saliva and urine.
- Hygiene is important - vaccinating herds against such diseases is recommended. A vaccine is also available to protect humans against contracting Q Fever.

SAFETY in cattle handling depends upon age, sex, breed, temperament, training of the animal and YOU!

Be sure to:

- concentrate and be alert;
- keep facilities in good repair;
- wear appropriate clothing;
- take care when working near animals.

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