



# MAFES Dawg Tracks

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## *Safety Tips: Work Safety around Large Animals*

Livestock handling related injuries are among the most severe of all agriculture related injuries.

The Colorado Workers' Compensation Authority made a study over a 10-year period from 1997-2006. They found that on 1,114 livestock handling claims, 50% of these were related to the dairy industry for milk parlor related claims. Horseback riding, sorting/penning and livestock handling equipment accounted for a high percentage of claims by cattle/livestock raisers and cattle dealers. Their summation was obvious to the livestock industry that improved handling methods would greatly improve their profitability and decrease injury losses through Workers' Compensation claims.

### 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 our folks feel comfortable around large animals because they have worked around them for a long time. But, even with much experience, it is hard to predict how the animals will react.
- ✓ Following are some reasons why animal-related accidents occur:
  - ~ Animals are sick, injured or stressed by the heat.
  - ~ Animals can be frightened and startled.
  - ~ Workers get tired, get in a hurry or distracted.
  - ~ Animals have been hit, neglected or otherwise abused in the past.
  - ~ Some workers are inexperienced in working large animals.
  - ~ Lighting is uneven and inadequate.
  - ~ Animal handling facilities are cluttered and overcrowded.

### Important Facts about Large Animals-

- ✓ 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 judging distances.
- ✓ Most animals are color blind, but they have very sensitive hearing. They can easily be startled by loud noises and by quick color changes.
- ✓ Cattle and horses cannot see what is directly behind them. Sudden movements are likely to scare 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.

### Be Alert to Warning Signs-

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

- Raised or pinned ears
- Raised tail or raised hair on their back
- Bared teeth
- Pawing the ground
- Snorting or growling sounds

*Don't try to handle an animal exhibiting one of these warning signs.*

### Other Important Tips-

- Always dress appropriately when working with large animals. Wear sturdy boots or shoes and work gloves or cowhide leather gloves.
- Wear a dust or mist respirator if you are working in dusty conditions. Check with your supervisor if you have questions regarding your respiratory protection.
- Keep animal facilities as clean as possible. Don't let clutter accumulate. Also, check for protruding nails, sharp edges and other potential dangers.
- Be sure that you have adequate lighting and check to be sure that you have an even distribution. Animals may become frightened by bright lights or shadows.
- Always have an emergency escape route when you're working in close quarters with large animals.
- Be respectful. Be patient and calm with them. Don't shove or push them. Never prod them if they have no place to go.
- Move slowly but deliberately around animals. Avoid sudden movements or 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 the kicking area.
- Avoid horseplay when working with large animals. Don't tease them and don't handle them when you are angry.

### DO'S AND DON'TS -SAFE HANDLING-

#### DO:

- ~ Keep young children away from large animals.
- ~ Be wary of large animals that are sick, hurt or appear frightened. Touch large animals gently. Don't shove them or hit them.

#### DON'T:

- ~ Surprise a large animal. Let the animal know you are approaching them by making a little noise. (Not loud)
- ~ Be aggressive with large animals, or try to show them that you're "superior."

### KEY POINTS-

- *Animals can be predictable.*
- *Always use extreme caution when working with large animals.*
- *Know the warning signs that can alert you to potential danger with animals.*

**IN THE PASTURE OR IN THE BARN**  
**LET SAFETY BE KNOWN!!**  
**BE ALERT <math>\diamond</math> BE SAFE <math>\diamond</math> BE ALIVE**

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Excerpts: [www.gemplers.com](http://www.gemplers.com) - [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov) 3/31/2015