

Safe handling of cattle

Purpose:

To promote the safe handling of cattle and ensure proper precautions are taken when handling or working around cattle.

Why:

To reduce the risks when handling cattle. Many injuries or fatalities are caused by crushing, kicking, butting, or goring. These risks are reduced if cattle are correctly restrained in sufficient, well-maintained handling equipment.

TIAH Capability Framework area:

This aligns with the knowledge and skills in the Health and Safety area.

<https://tiah.org/tiah-capability-framework>

Talk leader instructions:

- Prepare to do the talk in a suitable/quiet location with no distractions
- Consider using some of the resources as part of the talk, e.g. showing a video
- Engage with participants, ask questions and give everyday examples
- Conclude with a brief review
- Get everyone to sign the form. Make sure to write the name of the farm and the date. Keep a copy in your Health and Safety records
- Ensure all participants have access to a copy of this document to refer to once the session has finished. This could be electronic and emailed or printed

Background

There are always risks when working with large animals such as cattle. This level of risk can increase, particularly when attempting to carry out specific tasks, such as administering medicines or vaccinations, or if the animals haven't been handled frequently. This is sometimes the case with sucklers, newly calved cows, or those from the hills or moorlands.

Main learning points



Every farm should have proper handling facilities that are well-maintained and in good working order. This should include a race and crush suitable for the animals to be handled.

Many injuries and fatalities are often caused by using poor equipment, ineffective methods of moving cattle, and underestimating the strength, speed, and behaviour of cattle.

Even when good precautions are in place, you should always be aware of the risks when handling cattle.

Option to show this video of farmer Rob Lewis, who was attacked by a cow with a young calf (9 minutes):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVi7id2kAc4>



Familiarity and complacency with individual cattle can lead to a very dangerous situation, especially when handling bulls. According to the HSE, a number of accidents and fatalities happen each year because of this.



REMEMBER - A playful bull can injure or kill you as much as an aggressive one.

Aggressive animals should be removed from the herd and not sold on to become a problem to another farmer.



Notes:

Notes:

Suggestions/ ideas:

When handling cattle, you should be:

- Supervised until you are fully trained and competent in using all handling equipment, including race, crush, loading, and other equipment
- Familiar with zoonotic diseases that can spread from cattle to humans. For more information go to the NADIS website <https://nadis.org.uk/disease-a-z/cattle>
- In good physical and mental health and not under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Able to work calmly without shouting or using unnecessary force
- Able to separate the public from livestock wherever possible and use fields without public rights of way when cows are in calf

Option to show this video on 'Stress-free cattle handling systems with Dr. Temple Grandin (8.52 minutes):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEeJWguaCOK>

Discussion points



Q. If you found yourself in a situation where there wasn't a race or crush, what could be a safe alternative?

Feedback: Unfortunately, there isn't a safe alternative to a race or crush. Gates or hurdles are insufficient and will result in less efficient handling and risk of injury. Never attempt to treat an animal that can move freely in a pen or is held by gates alone.

Q. What should you do if you need to attend to an animal that's down or in loose boxes or isolation pens?

Feedback: Where possible, don't work alone, but if you must, make sure someone knows where and when you'll be working and how long you expect the task to take. Download the 'What3Words' app so that someone (including emergency services) can quickly locate you if there's an accident.

Be aware of the animal's movement and behaviour at all times and make a mental note of escape routes in case you need to exit the pen quickly.

Q. What emotional state are cattle normally in that could trigger a high-risk situation, and what situations can trigger this?

Feedback: The most common risk of injury is when the cattle are in the flight or fear state. Examples of how this can be triggered include:

- Unfamiliar noises, objects, or smells
- Sudden movement
- Separation from the herd or group
- Strangers in the home environment
- Aggressive or threatening encounters
- Alarm vocalisation (or cues) from other animals
- Exposure to predators or predator-related cues

Q. Are there any other concerns you'd like to discuss relating to safe cattle handling?

Working with large animals will always come with risks. Before carrying out any task with cattle, always assess the risk first and use machinery and equipment that’s in good working order and fit for purpose. Remember that cattle can be unpredictable, no matter how well you think you know them, and don’t take unnecessary risks if you aren’t fully trained and competent in handling cattle.

Resources:

Register for TIAH membership and get access to a host of online learning, including
TIAH Essential Skills: reducing risks when working with livestock:
<https://tiah.org>

HSE: Handling and housing cattle:
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais35.pdf>

HSE Farmwise: Your essential guide to health and safety in agriculture:
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg270.pdf>

NADIS: Safe Cattle Handling:
<https://www.nadis.org.uk/disease-a-z/cattle/safe-cattle-handling/>

HSENI: Handle Cattle Safely – Practical based seminar:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBV2Ss0XmDc>

AHDB Beef & Lamb: An introduction to cattle handling systems with Miriam Parker:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sf3Z2QNZSMk>

Toolbox Talk participants

Toolbox Talk: **Safe handling of cattle**

Name of farmDate

Talk leader name.....

Name	Signature	Date