

Canadian
Agricultural
Safety Week
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FACT SHEET #9

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Crushes and other livestock handling injuries

The placid image of cattle and horses is deceiving. They weigh over six times more than the average man and can crush bones with a single kick, step or charge. They are also the leading cause (30 per cent) of non-machinery death and injuries on Canadian farms, says a study done by the Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program,

The study also reveals significant patterns in the types of animal-related incidents. For example, almost half (46.5 per cent) of horse-related injuries happen to women, age 16 to 59, and are caused primarily by falls when riding. Men, age 16 to 59, are most frequently (68 per cent) injured by cows during the calving season of February to June. Men aged 60 and older are most frequently (57 per cent) killed by bulls in the month of August as the breeding season starts.

“Protect your moving parts!” is the theme of this year’s Canadian Agricultural Safety campaign with a focus on crushes, pinch points, entanglements, and the importance of guarding. The yearlong campaign will be launched with Canadian Agricultural Safety Week (CASW), March 14-20, 2007. The CASW campaign is delivered by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) in partnership with Farm Credit Canada (FCC) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC).

“By learning the behaviour patterns of livestock and practicing some basic safety rules, Canadian farmers and ranchers can significantly reduce their risk of injury or death from livestock,” explains Marcel Hacault, CASA Executive Director.

Most large farm animals, like cattle and horses, have very strong herd instincts. In their natural setting, horses and cattle derive comfort and a sense of security from being part of a herd. It is important to understand the herd instinct so that we can also understand the stress imposed on these animals when they are separated from the herd for things like herd health, veterinarian care or transporting.

Studies indicate that the most common contributing factor of injuries is from working in and around poorly constructed or inadequately designed facilities such as chutes and gates where handlers suffer multiple kicks, primarily to the lower extremities. The second most common injuries are lacerations, mostly to the hands, while performing elective minor surgical procedures such as castrating and dehorning.

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The third most common injuries occurred when loading and off-loading cattle and horses into a chute complex. These incidents usually involved crushing type injuries with the handlers inside the chute structure and involved bruised or broken ribs. And the fourth leading contributor of injuries was from using improper restraints, where hands, arms, and legs become entangled in ropes and halters or when tying cattle and horses to fences and rails that were inadequate for the situation. These injuries varied from minor bruises, to broken arms and fingers, and even loss of fingers. Cattle accounted for the majority of the injuries; however, when horses were involved the injuries were severe.

The handler's knowledge of animal characteristics is crucial to working safely with livestock. Here are some handling tips to promote the safety of the animals and the livestock handlers:

- Be patient and calm, yet firm when working with animals.
- Always leave yourself an emergency escape route when working in close quarters.
- Practise extreme caution when handling male animals (bulls, boars, stallions). There should be special facilities for these animals.
- Be very careful around newborn animals and their mothers. Most animals are aggressive when protecting their young.
- Keep children away from animals, especially in livestock-handling areas.
- Talk or whistle softly when approaching an animal so you don't surprise them.
- Keep working and walking areas clean and brightly lit.
- Check restraining equipment for wear and tear, and repair or replace as necessary.
- Wear steel-toed boots when working around livestock.
- Use extra caution around injured, sick or strange animals.
- Stay beside or behind an animal being led from a vehicle. Don't tie the lead line to your body or wrap it around your hand.
- Regulate or restrict entry into the animal-housing area to lower the risk of disease transmission.

The CFA along with FCC, CASA, and AAFC want to remind Canadian farmers that "*Protect your moving parts!*" means that you are responsible for your safety – so take the time to work safely. You're worth it!

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