



Safe FARM

Health and safety information for Alberta farmers

Spring 2013

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Safety in trailering livestock

Source: Livestock trailer safety. (2012) Farm and Ranch eXtension in Safety and Health (FReSH) Community of Practice. Retrieved from <http://www.extension.org/pages/64391/livestock-trailer-safety>

Towing a livestock trailer is a common practice on most farms and ranches. Livestock trailers, also referred to as stock trailers, are used to move livestock between locations, haul animals to shows, and transport animals to processing plants.

To safely tow a livestock trailer, your truck must be capable of towing the weight of the trailer plus the added weight

of the livestock. Check with the manufacturer to determine the Gross Combined Vehicle Weight (GCVW), which includes the tow vehicle's weight plus the loaded trailer weight. The GCVW rating can be located in the vehicle's serial number or in the operator's manual.

When calculating the weight, remember to include the weight for fuel, passengers, and cargo.

The manual for the trailer should specify a maximum tongue weight—the amount of the trailer's weight that presses down on the truck's

trailer hitch when using a bumper pull trailer or the truck's bed when using a gooseneck trailer. The majority of the weight (85 to 90 per cent) should be carried over the axles so that only 10 to 15 per cent of the weight is carried on the tongue.

Before using a livestock trailer, check both the truck and the trailer to ensure that they are in good work-



Be sure your tow vehicle is capable of handling the trailer plus the added weight of livestock and equipment.

ing condition. In addition, take the following actions:

Latches and safety chains: Double check the latches and the safety chains and cables between the truck and trailer to make sure they are fastened securely. Make sure you are

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Farm safety tips

- ➔ Children of any age should never be taken for a ride on tractors or other farm machinery. Extra riders are at a high risk for falling off or being run over. Remember the rule: One seat; one rider!
- ➔ Make sure your spring farming equipment is in good working condition. Ensure all protective guards and shields are securely in place. Never clean, oil or adjust any equipment while the machine is running.
- ➔ Remember to always turn off equipment, lower hydraulics, and remove the key before leaving equipment and vehicles unattended.
- ➔ Staying alert during spring farm work is very important. Fatigue, drowsiness and illness can lead to mishaps in the field. Drink lots of water, and remember to eat properly throughout the day. Take breaks for your mind and your body. Recognize when you have had enough, and turn the operation over to someone else.
- ➔ It is a good idea to have someone trained in first aid on each farm work team. Keep well stocked first aid kits and updated fire extinguishers on hand at each work site. Be sure workers know how to use a fire extinguisher. And keep important phone numbers on hand in case of emergency.
- ➔ Does your farm have a safety plan? Designate one person to this task. Hazard assessments, emergency procedures and communication methods should all be considered. On any farm, it's important to plan for safety.
- ➔ Spraying season can be dangerous for workers. Be sure to wear protective clothing when handling or applying any chemicals. Use respirators, gloves and chemical-resistant overalls to ensure there is no contamination.

Creating safe play areas on the family farm

By Kenda Lubeck and Raelyn Peterson, ARD Farm Safety Coordinators

Spring is here on the farm and with it comes increased daylight, warm weather and so much to explore outside. Children of all ages benefit from playing outside, but before you send the troops out the door, take a moment to think: what potential dangers are lurking on your farm?



Young children need constant supervision from a responsible caretaker when playing outside on a farm.

The most important factor to a child's safety on the farm is supervision. Having a responsible caregiver watch young children at all times and knowing exactly the whereabouts of older children is key to keeping future farmers safe from harm. An effective way to supervise young children is to designate a special play area for them. It is important that the area has clear boundaries – preferably a fenced area that physically restricts children from leaving. Toys and other fun stuff should be inside the play area so children aren't tempted to wander away.

Inevitably children will explore other areas of the farm as they gain more independence. For this reason it is important to designate hazardous areas as 'No Play Areas.' Children may not recognize or understand the dangers on a farm nor do they always remember the rules for each particular situation. Even as they gain more independence, children should be reminded often what is safe and practice a 'check in'



system.

'No Play Area' decals

To clearly mark dangerous areas on the farm, use easily identifiable signage such as decals. Decals are a great visual reminder for both adults and children. Adults can use the decal to remind kids of the rules, and once children recognize the decal as a warning, they learn to stay away from the area or piece of machinery marked by a decal.

Places you can put a decal

Some areas you may want to mark with 'No Play Area' decals are granaries, chemical storage sheds, grain augers, grain trucks, well houses, root cellars, medicine storage areas, dugouts and animal corrals or pens. Each farm is unique so it is important for parents and caregivers to carefully consider how they want children to perceive their surroundings. Remember that the more children hear and see what is safe and not safe, the more they will develop the ability to make safe choices. 🌻

'No Play Area' decals are available free of charge from Alberta Farm Safety. See back page for contact information.

Low-stress cattle handling

By R. Gill, C. Pate and R. Machen

Source:

<http://extension.usu.edu/BEHAVE/files/uploads/Herding%20and%20Handling/Cattle%20Handling%20Pointers.pdf>

Safe and effective cattle handling has always been important. In the last few years there has been a move toward what has been called low-stress handling or as we prefer to call it a return to sound stockmanship. Following is a list of ten handling pointers worthy of review before your next trip to the pasture or pens.

The role of a stockman is to create movement in cattle and then use position to control and manage that movement to the desired result. When cattle lose movement they become reluctant to work for you and excessive pressure and driving aids are more likely to be used to force movement within the cattle. Creating and managing movement is the key to low-stress cattle handling.

There are three basic principles of cattle behavior that, when used properly, can improve the ease and speed of working cattle while reducing stress and increasing safety and efficiency. Those principles are:

1. Cattle want to see you

An understanding of how cattle see is basic to getting cattle to respond to your position when working live-



Low-stress cattle handling is an effective way to minimize the risks of working with cattle.

stock. Cattle can see everywhere but directly behind them or a small blind spot in front of them. Movement toward the blind spot behind them causes an animal to turn their head to keep you in their line of sight. This can be used to your advantage to change direction of cattle or to your detriment if you are trying to drive cattle straight. When working from behind, it is important to keep moving side to side to prevent cattle from turning in an effort to keep you in their line of sight.

2. Cattle want to go around you

Armed with this tip, position yourself such that, when they do go around you, they are pointed directly at the gate or destination you had in mind. They'll think it was their idea to go there!

3. Cattle want to be with and will go to other cattle

A herding instinct is natural among 'prey' animals. There is safety in numbers and they know it. As stockmen we can take advantage of this natural instinct as we work from the front of cattle. If you start moving the cattle in the front, the animals in the back will follow. This is also why you should never leave one animal alone in a pen.

Keeping these three principles in mind, following are a few suggestions that will improve the ease of handling cattle, whether they are being gathered from

the pasture or processed through the corrals.

The only way to work cattle quickly is slowly

Patience is a great virtue when gathering and working cattle. When we get in a hurry, inevitably we put excessive or incorrect pressure on cattle, which usually results in an unintended reaction from the cattle. Then we get to ride (or walk) to the back and start over...

Work from the front to draw cattle to you

This goes back to the first basic principle. Cattle can be easily controlled from the front if they are not afraid of a human. (If they are afraid you are a long way from being able to handle cattle using low-stress principles.) Working from the front helps keep cattle from wanting to turn back in an effort to keep you in their line of sight. By moving in and out of the flight zone and point of balance, cattle can be easily drawn forward and past you to get them to go where you need them to go.

Most people have seen this diagram (figure one, page four) outlining the flight zone and point of balance on a cow. However, it is important to remember that these are all just in theory and each individual animal will react differently to body position within these zones. The manner in which you approach or enter these zones or points of balance will impact how the animal responds.

Where each animal's point of balance falls varies greatly and is influenced by pressure in front or behind, draw of cattle ahead or behind them, and whether or not they are comfortable going by the handler. Suffice it to say that the point of balance on

Continued on page 4...

any given animal is not where it is drawn on this diagram.

Forget the angles and circles drawn below. It is the responsibility of each and every person handling cattle to be able to read and determine where these points are on each animal or herd you approach. About the only thing that is correct is the representation of the blind spot in the diagram. It is extremely difficult to stay in an animal's blind spot. They will turn their head slightly to keep you in their line of sight. You can use this to your advantage to draw cattle to one eye or the other when working from behind.

Apply pressure when cattle have a place to go

Low stress livestock handling is not about handling cattle with no pressure. In fact the success of handling cattle correctly depends on knowing when and where to apply pressure and how much pressure to apply. The other key component to low-stress handling is setting the cattle up to go where you want them to go before you apply pressure. It is also just as important to release the pressure as soon as the desired result is achieved.

Cattle must be comfortable to go by you and stay straight

If cattle are not comfortable going by you, they will not work for you very well. Working from the front requires you to enable the cattle to pass you without balking or spooking. This simple principle facilitates penning, sorting and processing cattle.

The further forward you can make an animal's point of balance the easier it is to work and sort cattle. That is why using the draw of other cattle makes it easier to work and

sort cattle in an alley or from one corral to another.

If an animal is abruptly stopped when it tries to pass the handler they will be increasingly reluctant to try and come by the handler. That is why it is important to not stop forward motion abruptly but rather allow the animal time and room to turn back until it is time for you to release the pressure by stepping out

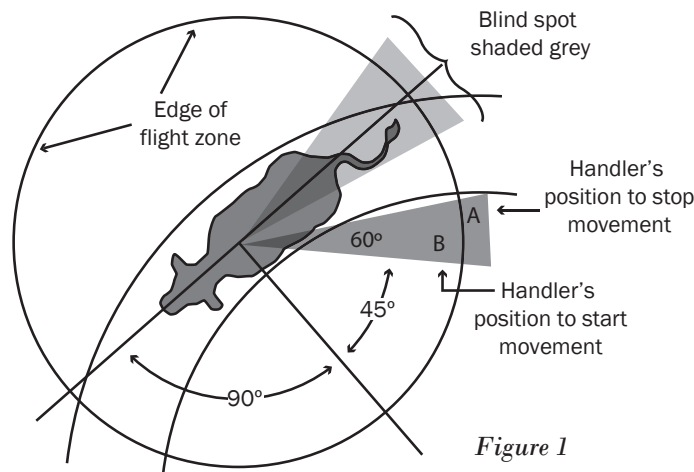


Figure 1

and toward them and asking them to go by, simply by changing your body position.

This simple procedure of properly stopping and turning cattle away or back will make the difference in how cattle work throughout the day and their life. If the handler has to move past the point of balance as shown in the above diagram to get an animal out of the group, that can put the handler out of position to control movement of the cattle behind them, further aggravating the problem.

The key is to position yourself such that, when cattle go where they want to go, it is exactly where you intended for them to be.

When working cattle, move in triangles

Sounds odd, but it works. Move in straight lines. For example, if you work in an arch pattern behind cattle, you will find them being drawn

from side to side (and consequently walking in a zigzag pattern) as they follow your movement. Move into their flight zone to create or correct movement. Retreat from their flight zone to slow or stop movement.

Pressure cattle from behind only when absolutely necessary

Like any 'prey' animal, cattle cannot see directly behind themselves.

If you assume a position directly behind cattle (in their blind spot), they will turn to one side or the other in order to see you. To 'drive' cattle in a straight line, assume a position behind their point of balance (shoulder) and off to either side.

Cattle work best when they are ready – you have to get them there

Cattle are not mind readers.

You have to teach, condition and prepare them. Unfortunately, today's cattle owners are short on time and experienced labour, and consequently, don't spend time with their cattle as did the stockmen of days gone by. Perhaps there's not time to educate the entire existing herd, but quality time spent with replacement heifers will pay dividends for years to come. Spend time with heifers (in both the pasture and the pens) when you want to, not just when you have to. 🌻

“The days of ‘whoop and holler’ cattle handling need to pass — quickly.”

Livestock trailer safety continued from page 1

using a ball that is the correct size for the trailer.

Trailer brakes: Inspect the break-away cable or brake system. In Alberta brakes are required on any trailer over 910 kilograms being towed by a private passenger tow vehicle.

Wheel bearings: Repack the wheel bearings on a regular basis and replace as necessary.

Electric wiring and connections: Make sure all wiring is in good condition. Trailer connectors should match the truck connectors. Check to make sure that all the lights (brake light, turn signals, and tail lights) on both the truck and the trailer are working. Make sure the electrical connection is securely plugged into the truck.

Tires: Examine the tires for signs of dry rot, wear, or damage, and make sure that all tires, including the spare and inside dual tires, have the correct air pressure. Consider replacing tires at least every five years, regardless of use.

Lug nuts: Inspect the lug nuts regularly to ensure they are properly tightened.

Flooring: Inspect the trailer floor to make sure it is sturdy and clean. If more traction is needed, install rubber matting. Replace floor boards that are showing signs of wear or rot.

Battery: If you use battery-powered accessories, ensure that your emergency battery is charged and ready for use.

Brake controllers: Test your brake controllers and make adjustments as needed depending on the weight of your trailer.

The first step in testing your electric brakes is to locate the controller or adjuster, which is typically located beneath the instrument panel on the tow vehicle. The controller has an adjustment button (+ or -) and sliding

lever. You may need to use the controller to increase braking power (+) for heavier loads or decrease braking power (-) for lighter loads.

Once you have located the controller, slowly move forward on a level surface and shift the tow vehicle transmission to neutral. Use the slide lever on the brake controller to bring the load to a stop using the trailer brakes.

The weakest links...

Hitch rating

Hitches are rated for weight similar to trucks. Before you mount a hitch in your pickup truck, be sure it will handle the loads you will be towing.

Tire rating

Tires are also rated for weight. Check the sidewall and compare the load rating to the load each tire will be required to carry.

Safety chains

Safety chains are required by law on a bumper pull and goose neck hitch, but not on a fifth-wheel hitch equipped with safety latches. On a bumper pull, safety chains should be crossed under the tongue and just long enough to enable the rig to turn, but not so long as to drag on the ground.

If the trailer brakes cause the truck to jerk, your trailer brakes are adjusted too high. Lower the braking power on the trailer until the trailer comes to a smooth stop. If the truck and loaded trailer do not slow to a stop, the brake controller must be adjusted to a higher level.

Loading the Trailer

Loading animals into a trailer can sometimes be frustrating, but there are steps to make the task safer and, ideally, easier. For example, lower the back of the trailer as much as possible so that animals may step into the trailer without having to step up. Remember to be patient and calm during the loading process so that you do not scare or stress the ani-

mals. Additional recommendations include the following:

Weight distribution: When using a bumper pull trailer, place the heaviest animals in the front of the axles. Load older and larger animals first, followed by younger and smaller animals.

Ties: When tying animals in the trailer, use ties with quick release snaps and secure at head height in the trailer.

Visibility: Make sure animals can see you when you enter and exit the trailer, when you are in the trailer, and when you tie or untie them.


Squeeze and pinch points: Remain alert to the danger of being pinned between animals and trailer sides and being pinched by the trailer gate.

Gates: Once the animals are loaded into the trailer, quickly close the gates and ensure that they are secure.

Protrusions: Inspect the trailer for broken or sharp objects protruding into the trailer. These items should be repaired immediately to prevent injury to an animal or operator.

Traveling

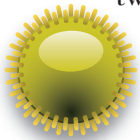
When driving on any roadway, always maintain a safe speed, keep your headlights on, and stay alert. Braking time increases when you are towing a full trailer, so maintain a safe distance from the vehicle in front of you and leave adequate room to stop. Plan your travel time carefully, and be aware that weather can cause delays by impacting road conditions and animal comfort.

Do not lock the trailer when you are transporting animals. In case of an emergency, rescue workers will have easier access to an unlocked trailer. For your animals' safety, do not allow them to hang their heads out of the trailer, where they could be injured by flying objects. 

Microscopic hazards can cause gigantic problems

By Nicole Hornett, ARD Farm Safety Coordinator

What do salmonella, rabies and ringworm have in common? If you identified them as diseases that can affect both humans and livestock, you're right! Diseases like these are classified as **zoonotic** meaning they can be passed back and forth between humans and animals.



While these microorganisms and viruses are microscopic in size, they require the same concern, identification and control you'd give any other farm hazard. Exposure to these minuscule hazards can cause distress, debilitation and death – how are you protecting yourself?

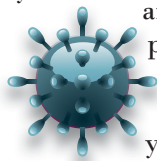
Know the Job

Zoonoses (plural of zoonosis) are not just a concern for developing countries! Dr. Wilkinson's study, titled *Zoonotic Disease Risk for Livestock Production Workers*, listed almost 30 zoonotic diseases of significance to farm workers in western Canada. As a livestock handler, you may be exposed to these hazards through saliva, blood, feces, urine, mucous and other bodily fluids. Bacteria, viruses and fungi can be contracted through the air, soil, wa-

ter, on the skin or via insect contact. Accidental ingestion is the most common route of infection.

Know the Hazard

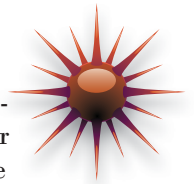
Over 60 per cent of infectious diseases are zoonotic. Knowing the hazards of the job is an essential step in controlling them. Particular jobs may place workers at a higher risk for infection. These jobs include working with sick or diseased animals, cleaning up infected bodily fluids, treating wounds, disposing of dead animals, assisting with births, cleaning up afterbirth, handling stillborns, performing castrations, handling unhatched eggs or unintentional needle-stick injuries. Does your farm's safety plan include an infection control and response plan?



Know the Drill

Zoonotic diseases should be clearly identified as a possible farm hazard and staff should have the working knowledge to identify how and where exposure could occur. Workers can reduce the risk of exposure by being cautious to not splash infected material, limiting dust created, handling

animals with care and reducing contact with their skin. Everyone should be

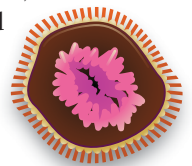


trained on preventive measures including how to select and wear appropriate personal protective equipment (waterproof coveralls, gloves, eye protection, respirator masks and boots).



Good personal hygiene, thorough hand-washing techniques and safe work practices (including biosecurity best practices) are essential to eliminating or limiting the spread of disease.

For further information on zoonotic diseases, visit the Alberta farm safety website at alberta.agriculture.ca/farmsafety. View our *Safety Up! – On Zoonotic Diseases* fact sheet to learn about common zoonoses, the risks that result in their spread and procedures you can follow to reduce the chance of infection. As these diseases affect both humans and animals, professionals such as nurses, doctors, veterinarians and animal health technologists can be invaluable sources of information.



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“Hindsight is a wonderful thing but foresight is better, especially when it comes to saving a life, or some pain!”