



April 1, 2019

## Safety Around Livestock and Farm Animals



***Working with livestock or farm animals is not for the faint of heart***

Cows, horses, sheep, pigs, and dogs are common fixtures on many farms and ranches in Alberta. The hazards associated with these animals come in all shapes and sizes, as do the animals themselves. Being struck by the animal is a common hazard and can easily occur if you're working near livestock and not focused on the task at hand. Animals will react to changes in their environment, so it is important to pay attention to animal behaviors.

Some animals may perceive danger and attempt to escape or run, while other animals may become nervous or agitated and kick-out or even attack. These reactions may worsen if the animal is sick, injured, or nursing her young. Even animals with a mild temperament can become dangerous under the right circumstances. Behaviours are not the only problem when it comes to animal safety. Some other hazards include: being struck by or pinned against gates; tripping or slipping on uneven ground or slippery work surfaces; pinch points on gates, equipment, or tools being used, and; handling or administering medications.

Let's not forget about biosecurity concerns, and the potential for spread of disease or bacteria. There is a lot to think about. And we can agree there is a considerable level of risk

when working around or handling livestock and farm animals.

### So how do I manage the risks associated with livestock and farm animals?

- The good news is that through effective planning and incorporating control measures into our daily routines with livestock and farm animals, we can manage these hazards to create an environment that is safe to work within. Some control measures you might consider implementing on your farm or ranch include:
- Wear appropriate footwear. This might mean boots with adequate traction in mucky pens or uneven surfaces or steel-toed footwear that will protect against trampling or puncture.
- Wear appropriate head protection if you're at risk of a fall or strike. Helmets are a trendy accessory that have the potential to prevent serious head injuries.
- Verify equipment is in good working order. The equipment you'll need will depend on what type of task you're performing and what type of livestock or farm animal you're dealing with. Some examples of equipment we use to work with or handle livestock or farm animals with might include a livestock chute or other types of enclosures, calving jacks, feeding spears or dispensers, ropes and halters, ear tags and applicators and the list goes on. All equipment should be visually inspected before use. *If equipment is in good working condition, a malfunction resulting in an injury is less likely to occur.*
- If you're handling or administering medications, read the Safety Data Sheet provided by the manufacturer or your veterinarian.
- Plan and designate an escape route, make sure that the escape route isn't obstructed and that it is accessible to everyone working in the area.
- Come up with a work-alone check-in system if you need to be by yourself while working around livestock or farm animals. If you must work with an animal that is known to be aggressive, use the buddy system.
- Always stay aware and alert, animal behavior can change in an instant. Anticipating and reacting to animal behavior can go a long way toward preventing injuries and incidents on the farm.
- Be familiar with the biosecurity concerns surrounding the animals you're dealing with and how to protect the spread of disease or bacteria. This might include donning specific PPE and removing the PPE after your contact with animals.
- Build safe habits. If you put on your gloves every time you handle an animal with a lead rope, your behavior becomes a habit. The act of donning the gloves becomes less difficult and more natural over time. When the animal tries to pull away or spooks, you have eliminated the chance of a rope burn injury. You've developed a safe habit.

### What else should I keep in mind?

- Perform a [hazard assessment](#) on the type of animals you're working with. This will help you think critically about specific hazards and how you can deal with them. Once complete, spend time reviewing the results of the hazard assessment with those who may be affected. People affected may include your family, staff, or visitors.

- Training should be provided to anyone who will work around or handle livestock or farm animals. Workshops or online material on working safely around livestock or low stress cattle handling can be a helpful tool.
  - All animals are unique and respond to stimuli differently. Don't believe that because you've worked with one animal that responded a certain way, that the next one will as well.
  - Don't let your guard down around the quiet animals in the herd, animals are unpredictable.
  - Of animal related deaths on farms and ranches in Alberta, horses and cows were most often involved. The average weight of a cow is 1390 lbs. The average weight of a horse is 1000 lbs. The average weight of a human is 137 lbs.
  - Ensure children working near or with livestock and farm animals understand the safety measures in place on your farm. Children should know not to walk near the hind end of large animals, to behave calmly and carefully around animals, and to avoid playing in pastures or pens.
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## AgSafe Alberta extends a warm welcome to two new staff members

Kaylee Waldner, CRSP has joined the team as our Safety Manager. Kaylee will be developing resources and tools to help farms and ranches build a safety program that is practical and encourages a culture of safety. Shannon Lyons has come onboard as our Communications Manager. Shannon will work to increase the awareness about AgSafe and help build resources to deliver the materials for the program. Kaylee and Shannon both bring a wealth of experience and passion to their roles. We look forward to seeing them support AgSafe's mission of *establishing a health and safety culture on all farms and ranches across Alberta that is ongoing and enduring.*

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## AgSafe Alberta OUT AND ABOUT

The AgSafe Alberta team does presentations and workshops for agriculture commodity groups and participates in industry tradeshow throughout the province. Our Advisors are out working individually with farmers and ranchers across Alberta. AgSafe provided farm safety management information at the following events and workshops over the last month:

**MARCH 2019**

**March 28:** Lacombe County Spring Tune Up health and safety tradeshow

**March 27:** Potato Growers of Alberta workshop

**March 22:** Kneehill ASB workshop

**March 19:** Vermilion Ag breakfast meeting

**March 15:** Grassland Ag Society tradeshow

**March 14 to 16:** SARDA Ag Research Agricultural tradeshow

**March 12 to 14:** Alberta Beef Industry Conference tradeshow

**March 7:** Silver Creek Ag Society workshop



#### **APRIL EVENTS**

**April 5:** [Leduc County workshop](#)

If you would like AgSafe Alberta to attend or present at one of your agricultural events, please email:

[info@agsafeab.ca](mailto:info@agsafeab.ca) with details.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR EVENT DETAILS

## Farm Health And Safety Producer Grant Program

On October 15, 2018, the Alberta government launched the Farm Health and Safety Producer Grant, a cost-sharing initiative that matches dollars for approved equipment upgrades and specific projects designed to make employees safer.

Up to \$6 million is available through the grant process to help qualified farmers until March 2, 2021. Expenses incurred since January 1, 2018, and that meet the submission criteria, are covered by the program. The annual maximum is \$5,000 per applicant to a limit of \$10,000 over the life of the program.

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### **CANADIAN AGRICULTURE SAFETY WEEK 2019**

Thank you to all those who supported Farm Safety Week and our #AgSafeHunt by submitting your photos of safety on the farm!

Congratulations to the winners of our #AgSafeHunt:

- Ben Dyck
- Cora Scheele
- Ben Wipf

Check out all the submitted photos [here](#).



## YOUR SAFETY YOUR WAY

AgSafe Alberta is an agriculture based safety organization that is results-oriented, accountable, and transparent to our stakeholders with a focus on continuous improvement and best practices.

AgSafe's goal is to empower farmers and ranchers to integrate practical safety management programs into their daily operations to prevent illness and injury for everyone involved on the farm.

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