

## Safety First!

- Ensure livestock are in a sturdy fence or corral.
- Only allow participants to touch animals if there is one-on-one supervision.
- Keep animals comfortable by providing food, water and shade.
- Only use animals you are familiar with.

## Break the Ice

- Ask questions – this will encourage the children to be more involved!
- For example:
  - How many of you have large animals on your farm. What kinds of large animals do you have on your farm? How many of you help with chores and the animals?
  - Do you know anyone who has been injured while working with livestock?
  - What happened to them?
  - Tell them about yourself and any experiences you have with large animals.

## Take-Home Messages

- Ensure your presentation is age appropriate. If presenting to younger children, stress staying away from animals, staying on the other side of the fence and make sure they have an adult with them. If presenting to older participants, review animal behaviour and proper animal handling.
- Most injuries and accidents between children and animals occur between 4 – 6 p.m. on Saturdays.
- You are not being safe if you work when tired, in a hurry, stressed or feeling sick.
- Injuries happen when you are not paying attention.
- Awareness and common sense are key to your personal safety.

## Animal Behaviour

- Understanding animal behaviour plays a large part in keeping yourself safe.
- Animals see their environment differently than we do. For example, rapid movement can activate fear in animals.
- Fear and aggression is displayed by:
  - Raised or pinned ears
  - Raised/swishing tail
  - Raised back hair
  - Bared teeth
  - Pawing/stomping the ground
  - Snorting

- The eyes of some animals are located on the side of their head, not on the front like humans. This allows them to see more of their surroundings, but restricts their ability to perceive depth and judge distances. Animals are also sensitive to light changes.
- Animals have highly sensitive hearing and can often hear things that humans can't. The position of an animal's ears will often indicate how that animal will act.
- The **Flight Zone** is an animal's personal zone. Each flight zone will depend on that individual animal and how calm or stressed it is. Some animals become upset when people are in their flight zone and will generally turn away.
- The **Point of Balance** is at the animal's shoulder. Generally animals will move forward if the handler is behind the point of balance or backward if the handler is in front of the point of balance.
- **The blind spot or kick zone** is the area where animals can kick you. Avoid the kick zone by approaching an animal from the side, ensuring the animal can see you. Generally animals will turn to look at what is entering their kick zone.

### Handling

- Males that have not been neutered or castrated may be more dangerous. Children should never handle bulls, stallions, boars or rams.
- Wear the proper gear when handling animals. For example, when handling cattle wear long pants, long sleeved shirt and good boots. When riding a horse, wear boots with heels and a riding helmet. Avoid dangling jewellery and pull back long hair.
- Move slowly and deliberately around livestock.
- Avoid loud noises.
- Stay calm and patient.
- Use a calm and reassuring voice when approaching an animal.
- Always plan an escape route.
- Respect all animals, don't fear them and use common sense. They may not purposely hurt you, but their size and bulk make them potentially dangerous.
- Animals become fearful and agitated when separated from other animals.
- It can take 20 – 30 minutes for upset cattle to calm down.
- Never coil rope around your hand.
- Gates need to swing freely, be free of sharp edges or points and be large enough to accommodate the animals.
- Yards and lanes should be free of clutter and rocks and should be well drained.

**Horses**

- Horses account for approximately 50% of all injuries that involved livestock in Alberta.
- They can be easily spooked or frightened by unfamiliar, unexpected, loud or shrill noises.
- You can easily be kicked, pushed, run over or even stepped on by a horse.
- Watch the ears, tail and general body language for visual signs to tell you what the horse is thinking. Example: ears forward or laid back against head mean the horse is angry.
- Horses are more likely to be dangerous when:
  - They have a foal at their side
  - There are other strange animals around
  - Weather changes
  - Territory changes occur
  - New ownership occurs
- Know how to properly hold the lead rope to avoid becoming tangled.
- Fences are there for a reason and should be respected as boundaries at all times.
- Know blind spots (under head and behind tail) and proper ways to approach a horse.
- Do not run around horses.
- Always wear a riding helmet when riding.



### Interactive Activities

- Animal habits can cause injury to people if they try to interfere with the animal's routine. Children can learn this concept by playing this game: throw a ball in a specific order repeatedly to establish a pattern. Without giving any warning, change the directions of the pattern or ball. The established routine is broken and the children have to change a pattern midstream. Help children relate this information by explaining the "established routine" of a dairy cow that is on her way to the milking shed. Children in the path of large animals are not only at risk of being run over, but also may spook the animal.
- Fences on the farm are there to protect both animals and humans. Using a magnetic board or paper farm scene, teach which animals should be behind fences and where children should be in relation to these fences. Discuss the importance of following the farm rules and the boundaries established by parents.
- Illustrate a horse's monocular vision by having one student pretend they are a horse. Place a barrier between a "horse's" eyes and the floor. Have another child approach the "horse" from underneath and startle the "horse." Another child can lead the "horse" and have them explain their perceptions as a "horse." Discuss how the limited vision impacts the animal and what safety repercussions can occur.
- Protecting the brain and head with a helmet in the case of a fall from a horse is important. Stress this with a demonstration of dropping a mock brain made of moulded gelatine. Try the same demonstration with an egg or melon securely taped to the inside of the helmet. Discuss the importance of wearing a helmet.
- Finding articles about tragedies involving animals will help adolescents understand that injuries can happen to them. Feelings of invincibility are common; youth need to realize they can indeed become a statistic if not careful. Make the activity fun by having them take the scenario and re-write it using someone they know or acting out the situation depicted in the newspaper article. Stress what could be done to prevent animal-related tragedies.

### Notes