



# ANIMAL SAFETY TIPS ON THE FARM

## Facts

- In 2006, youth living on livestock operations had a significantly higher rate of injury (11.9 injuries/1,000 youth) compared to their counterparts in crop operations (8.4 injuries/1,000 youths).
- Between 1986 and 2012, animals accounted for 2.4% of IL farm fatalities.
- Animals often have a strong territorial instinct and may react unexpectedly if removed from that area.
- Lighting and shadow changes can easily excite or spook them.
- Animals are easily frightened by loud and sudden noises.
- Beef and dairy cattle, as well as swine, are colorblind and have poor depth perception causing sensitivity to lighting contrasts, movement, and noises.
- Cattle and horses can see everything around them except directly behind their hindquarters.
- Horses and mules tend to kick toward their hindquarters.
- Livestock with young offspring have a strong maternal instinct and tend to be very defensive and difficult to handle
- Animals often become defensive when cornered about their environment or people with that environment and may act aggressively to protect themselves.
- Male animals tend to be instinctively more aggressive and should be handled with extra caution.

## Injury/Illness Prevention

- Always have an exit between you and the animals and be aware of this exit at all times; this is especially important when working in close quarters, with sick or injured animals, or under strange conditions (unusual territory, severe storms, etc).
- Always use restraining equipment properly.
- Avoid startling an animal by moving in a calm and predictable manner; do not make sudden or loud movements and noises.
- Keep children and visitors away from animal handling areas.
- Never approach an animal from its blind spot.
- Animals can be unpredictable; be aware of their unusual behaviors and note any changes.
- Keep all equipment and gates in good condition
- Exercise patience when working with animals; getting angry and yelling will only stress and agitate the animal and may cause defensive behavior.
- Always protect yourself by wearing proper personal protective equipment: gloves, steel toe boots, long pants and shirt, helmet, etc.
- Wash your hands for a minimum of 20 seconds with flowing warm water and soap after touching an animal.  
How long is 20 seconds? Sing "Happy Birthday" or the "Alphabet Song (ABCs)" to yourself once at a regular pace.

### References

- Ref 1 - Hendricks, KJ and Goldcamp, EM. Injury Surveillance for Youth on Farms in the U.S., 2006. *Journal of Agricultural Safety and Health*. 16 (4): 279-291.
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- Ref. 3 - Center for Disease Control: Animal Safety, <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2010-137/pdfs/2010-137.pdf>
- Ref. 4 - National Ag Safety Database, Safety with Farm Animals, <http://nasdonline.org/document/1661/d001536/safety-with-farm-animals.html>
- Ref 5 - Better Health Channel, Farm Safety – handling animals,  
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- Ref. 6 - Integrated Plant Protection Center, Farm Safety Tip – livestock safety,  
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