

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Livestock
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Keep safe around animals



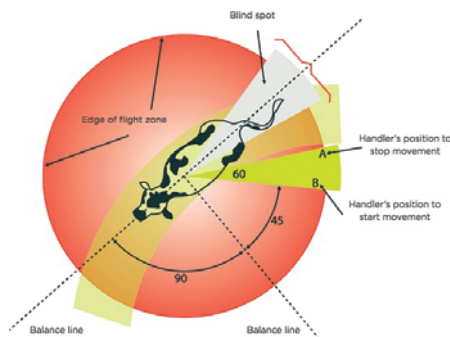
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Statistics from the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) show that from 2012 to 2021 livestock were the cause of 38 farm workplace fatalities. Being aware of an animal's personal space and temperament, having good handling facilities and taking the correct precautions can all help to reduce the number of injuries and fatalities associated with livestock.

The flight zone

The flight zone is an animal's personal space and can be used to move animals. The size of the flight zone can vary from 5-20ft (1.5-6m) and is determined by how tame the animal is. Walking too close to the animal and entering its flight zone (shaded red in **Figure 1**) will cause stress and the animal may back away or react erratically. The handler should sense the edge of the flight zone and work at it to avoid animal upset. A handler should be calm and make low-pitched sounds. A stick should be carried to



*FIGURE 1: Be aware of the animal's personal space.
(Source (adapted): Temple Grandin (1997).)*

guide an animal but never to strike it. The animal's point of balance is at its shoulder, and they will move forward if the handler stands behind the point of balance and will move back if the handler is in front of this point of balance.

Handling livestock – five top tips

1. People handling stock should be experienced and able to react quickly if a dangerous situation arises.
2. Livestock are more of a risk to your safety when being moved, separated or released. Having good handling facilities can facilitate these movements and provide a physical barrier between you and the animals.
3. Handling facilities should be in good condition and appropriate for the type and size of animal being handled. There should be a drafting area and a good restraining gate. It is also advisable to have a wide foot stand to walk along beside the crush so that any handling can be carried out easily.
4. You should never enter the crush with the animals. When entering a pen with animals always ensure that you have an escape route planned.
5. Gates should be hung properly and secure so that they can be effective as a barrier between you and the animal. Calving gates are very useful in facilitating the handling of a cow in a safe manner.

Herdin

Here are some tips to keep safe while herding:

- it is important to only enter the fields with stock when necessary;
- a tractor or jeep should be brought herding as a refuge, or stay close to a fence that can allow you to exit if needed;
- always carry a phone when out with animals, in case a dangerous situation arises or an injury occurs; and,
- it is also a good idea to let someone know where you are going and what time you expect to be back at.

Aggression

Although bulls are often seen as the main danger, cows can be just as aggressive and unpredictable depending on the time of the year, and cows with

calves accounted for 32% of livestock-related fatalities from 2012 to 2021. Cows can be aggressive when they are protecting their young or at stressful times such as calving. When possible, keep a barrier between you and the animal. Bulls accounted for 18% of fatalities from livestock. Breeding bulls should have a nose ring on them at 10 months of age. This should be fitted by a vet. Bulls at pasture should also have a chain fitted to the nose ring, so if an attack occurs there is a means of controlling the animal. Aggressive animals should be culled from the herd to reduce the chances of an incident occurring. When making breeding decisions or buying in stock, docility, which is a heritable trait, should be considered.



Watch out for aggression.

Action plan

1. Never turn your back on an animal.
2. Keep a barrier between you and the animal where possible.
3. Always have an escape route planned.
4. Always tell someone where you are going when working alone.
5. Always carry a mobile phone.

For more information on livestock safety visit teagasc.ie and HSA.ie. A livestock safety video is available by scanning the QR code.



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