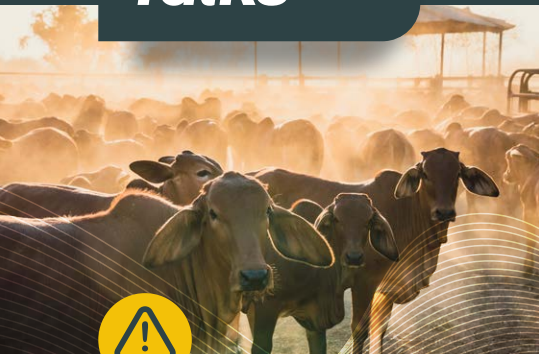


Toolbox Talks



We all need to remember

- If you are unsure of anything or feel that something you have been asked to do is dangerous, DO NOT begin the task. ASK for assistance or more information and we will work together to find a safe way to do the job or solve the problem.
- Ensure you are aware of the location of the nearest First Aid Kit.
- Make sure everyone is fit for work, free from signs of fatigue, drugs or alcohol. If in doubt, ask or talk to your manager.
- This farm is a workplace, but may also be a place of residence for the owner, their managers and employees. Be vigilant for children and bystanders at all times. Refer to *Child Safety on Farms*.
- The safety, health and wellbeing of all who live on, work on and visit this farm is the most important responsibility we all share.

Even if we are busy and under time or financial pressures, safety MUST come first.



emergencyplus
Save the App that could save your life.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

In case of emergency, CALL 000 or your local emergency service provider, then call your manager or supervisor.

POISONS 13 11 26
Poisons Information Centre

A Practical Guide

Safe Handling of Cattle in Yards and Pens

Cattle handling is an essential part of farm operations, but it can also be hazardous if not done safely. This Toolbox Talk aims to provide you with essential safety guidelines to ensure your well-being when working with cattle in yards and pens.

The Hazards and Risks

Interacting with cattle in close confines comes with a variety of safety concerns primarily due to the following factors:

Cattle are prey animals and will either flee or fight if they perceive danger. Most cattle will choose to flee if possible, but they may fight if they feel cornered or threatened. In yards and pens when the option to flee is removed cattle may see fighting as their only option.

Cattle can exhibit independent behaviours that may not be consistent with previous behaviours. These behaviours can be influenced by a variety of factors including:

- Their level of stress in the moment.
- Their breeding.
- Prior handling and education.
- Environmental conditions.
- Proximity to their herd.
- Health of animals.
- Whether they have calves at foot.

Cattle can be of substantial size, weight, and strength. These factors as well as their ability to move quickly can result in very serious and even fatal injuries to humans.

Possible Harm

Common Injuries

Cattle are large and powerful animals. They can cause injury by stepping on, trampling, crushing, goring, or kicking workers while displaying normal herd behaviour.

In confined spaces, such as yards and pens, the risk of injury is heightened due to the close proximity of workers to cattle.

Other Injuries

Other Injuries can happen when handling cattle in yards due to:

- Becoming pinned or crushed between fences, gates, or other equipment if cattle become agitated or aggressive in tight quarters.
- Broken, malfunctioning, or incorrectly used equipment and tools resulting in fractures, lacerations, amputations, or fatal injuries.
- Needle stick and sharps related injuries can occur during veterinary procedures which may result in skin infections, allergic reactions and/or deep tissue wounds.

Slips, Trips, and Falls

There may be an increased risk of slips, trips, and falls in cattle yards and pens due to:

- Wet or muddy conditions.
- Animal urine and faeces.
- Obstacles.
- Uneven surfaces.

Zoonotic Diseases

Cattle can carry diseases that can be transmitted to humans. Close proximity to cattle can increase the risk of exposure to these diseases, especially if veterinary procedures are being performed and if proper hygiene practices are not followed.



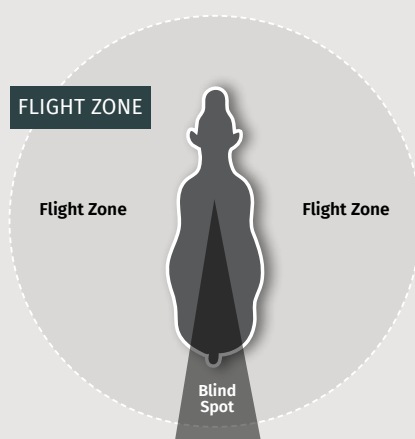
Toolbox Talks

A Practical Guide Handling of Cattle in Yards and Pens

Reducing the Risk

Understand Flight Zones

A flight zone in cattle handling refers to the animal's personal space or comfort zone, where it feels safe from perceived threats or pressure. It's essentially an invisible boundary surrounding the animal. When a human or another object enters this zone, the animal will react by attempting to move away to re-establish a comfortable distance. The size of a flight zone can vary depending on the individual animal, its previous experiences, and the level of stress it is currently experiencing. Entering an animal's flight zone abruptly, or aggressively when they don't have the option to flee may trigger the animal to fight.



Links and Resources

Safe Work Australia – Guide to Managing Risks in Cattle Handling
safeworkaustralia.gov.au

Safe Work Australia – Work-Related Infectious and Parasitic Diseases Australia
safeworkaustralia.gov.au

NSW DPI – Handling Cattle
dpi.nsw.gov.au

NSW DPI – Zoonoses – Animal Diseases that can Infect People
dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/animal/humans

OBSERVE THE WHOLE POSTURE



RELAXED / EXPLORING

PAIN, SCARED OR COLD

Allow Animals to Settle

If cattle have been recently mustered or offloaded into yards, allow them time to settle into their new environment before beginning work.

Understand Cattle Behaviours

Maintain Knowledge and Awareness:

The behavioural traits and temperament of cattle can vary from animal to animal and can also vary depending on breed. Get to know the animals that you are working with and watch them constantly for indications that they are feeling threatened or are becoming aggressive.

Monitor Stress Indicators: Key stress indicators to watch for in cattle are a stiff posture with tense muscles and a head either raised higher than normal or lowered toward the ground with a rigid, arched neck. If these kinds of postures or aggressive behaviours are observed retreat to a safe distance, only continue with your tasks once it is safe to do so but proceed with caution. Be aware that some animals can act aggressively with little to no prior indication.

Avoid Separation Anxiety: Animals separated from their herd can become stressed and aggressive quickly. If animals need to be isolated for any reason, handle them with care and return them to their herd as soon as possible.

Avoid Overcrowding: Too many cattle in a yard or pen can increase animal stress and cause them to immediately go into fight mode if pressured by a human or other animals such as work dogs.

Be Mindful of Natural Responses and Herd Behaviours:

Bulls forced into close proximity may fight to assert dominance. Fighting bulls are very dangerous to bystanders. Stay well away from fighting bulls, or bulls that have recently been fighting, until an experienced person can resolve the situation. Cows can become more aggressive if they believe that their calves are being threatened. Be especially alert if working near cows with calves.

Safe Handling Techniques

Mind Your Approach: Avoid loud noises, sudden movements, or excessive shouting, as this can stress the cattle. Use slow and deliberate movements to guide the cattle rather than rushing them. Allow animals room to move away from pressure.

Correct Use of Facilities and Equipment:

Gateways, at a minimum, should be wide enough for animals to pass through without touching the posts. Gates should be opened fully and not able to swing shut accidentally and strike animals. Man-gates and self-locking latches are really good safety features to install if practicable.

Mind the Pressure: Cattle at the back of a herd can only move as fast as the ones in front allow them too. In high-pressure situations like funnelling cattle into a race or up a ramp allow time for lead animals to make room for animals at the back.

Avoid Threatening Behaviour: Never kick or hit cattle to move them; instead, use body language and pressure points to promote movement.

Stay Visible: Remain upright; avoid sitting or lying down around cattle, as they may not see you and could accidentally injure you.



A Practical Guide Handling of Cattle in Yards and Pens

In Small Pens or Yards

Plan Escape Routes

Have a plan in mind for a way to quickly escape any pen or yard you are working in.

Stay Aware of Body Positioning

Avoid occupying spaces behind equipment that may move if an animal hits it, especially gates. Close and secure gates quickly behind cattle and move out of the gates swing zone as soon as possible. Avoid the kick zone of animals even when they are in a crush or cradle. Avoid turning your back to cattle.

Equipment and Facilities

Perform Regular Inspections

Check all yards and equipment for damage and defects prior to starting work. Broken fences, sharp edges, or unsecured equipment could harm both you and the cattle. Slip, trip and fall hazards should be removed if possible.

Check Gate Latches

Animal gates should be able to be closed and secured quickly and easily.

Check Escape Routes

Man-gates should be easily accessible, without obstacles and quick to operate.

Maintain Veterinary Tools

Keep tools for veterinary procedures in good condition and secured away from unauthorised use.

Perform General Upkeep

Fix any issues promptly to maintain a safe working environment.



Protective Clothing

Wear Sturdy Footwear

Enclosed shoes with ankle support and deep tread can help prevent ankle injuries as well as reduce the chance of slips, trips and falls.

Consider Long-sleeved Shirts and Long Pants

As well as providing sun protection these items of clothing can help reduce exposure to any chemicals used on animals as well as protect the skin from being exposed to animal byproducts that may spread zoonotic diseases. Heavy-duty workwear may also help to prevent cuts, scrapes and abrasions which could become infected. However, hi-vis clothing is not recommended as it may agitate cattle.

Zoonotic Diseases

Maintain Personal Hygiene

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and clean water after being around cattle or in spaces that they inhabit. This is even more important if handling cattle or coming into contact with their bodily fluids, manure, or touching contaminated equipment. Avoid touching your face, mouth, or eyes with unwashed hands. Use hand sanitisers with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. Change and wash your work clothes regularly.

Stay Safe when Eating and Drinking

Food and water should be stored in containers that prevent contamination. Consume food and water away from animal handling areas to reduce the risk of potential contamination and ensure proper hygiene such as hand washing occurs prior to eating.

Reduce Dust Exposure

If possible, reduce dust by watering yards with sprinklers prior to use. Consider wearing PPE like dust masks and glasses.

Wear Protective Clothing

Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when handling cattle, including gloves, safety glasses, masks, and aprons. PPE is especially important when performing animal husbandry activities.

Avoid Unwell or Deceased Animals

Any animals that are unwell or that have died of unknown causes should only be handled by an experienced person wearing the appropriate PPE.

Consider Vaccinations

Risks posed by the more common zoonotic diseases can be reduced by vaccinations. Vaccination options for cattle should be discussed with a veterinarian. Vaccination options for humans should be discussed with a qualified health professional.



Toolbox Talks

Facilitator Guide

INSTRUCTIONS

The information sheet is background information ONLY. Be sure to customise your talk to your operation and facilities.

How to deliver an effective Toolbox Talk

- Know your Topic. If you don't understand the material it will be hard to explain and make it relevant.
- Print copies of the Toolbox Talk Info sheet for yourself and each of the participants.
- Hold the talk in a location relevant to the topic being discussed.
- Explain why the Toolbox Talk is being held.
- Stay on topic and keep it simple.
- Encourage conversation and participation.
- Be sure to give real life examples whenever possible.
- Be open to questions.
- Read through the provided cases studies.
- After each study ask attendees what could have been done to prevent this situation.
- Conclude with a brief review of the main points or a summary based on the discussion.
- Record the details of the Toolbox Talk including the location, date and names of attendees.

Note: This Facilitator Guide is intended to provide a basic structure for conducting a Toolbox Talk. Customise it as needed to suit your specific audience and objectives. Always prioritise safety and ensure that participants have a clear understanding of the information presented.

A Practical Guide

Safe Handling of Cattle in Yards and Pens

Introduction

- Welcome everyone.
- Emphasise the importance of safe cattle handling in yards.
- Mention the objective: to raise awareness and provide practical tips for safe cattle handling in yards.

Icebreaker Consider starting with a brief question or scenario related to

cattle handling to engage participants. For example, "Have you ever had a close call when handling cattle in the yards, or do you know someone who has?"

Distribution of Resources

Handout printed Toolbox Talk Information Sheets and any other resources related to farm cattle handling safety.

Key Points

Understanding Cattle Behaviour

- Explain that cattle are prey animals, and their natural instinct is to flee from threats.
- Emphasise the importance of staying calm and avoiding sudden movements or loud noises when handling cattle.

Recognising Hazards

- Discuss potential hazards such as kicks, crushing, aggressive behaviour, and the size and strength of cattle.
- Explain that even seemingly calm cattle can become agitated in certain situations.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Emphasise the use of appropriate PPE.
- Mention the importance of suitable footwear to prevent foot injuries.

Safe Work Practices

- Stress the importance of low-stress cattle handling techniques.
- Highlight the concept of the flight zone and how it can be used to guide cattle safely.
- Discuss the significance of maintaining safe distances and avoiding unnecessary close contact.

Gate and Equipment Safety

- Remind workers to check gates and equipment for proper functioning and secure closures.
- Emphasise the need for smooth and quiet gate operation to avoid startling cattle.

Maintaining Clean and Safe Yards

- Explain the importance of regularly cleaning up and maintaining cattle yards. Especially the removal of slip, trip and fall hazards or obstacles that may prevent escaping from a dangerous situation.
- Mention the benefits of dust control and clean, well-ventilated facilities.



Interactive Discussion and Case Studies

Encourage participants to share their experiences, challenges, or questions related to handling cattle in yards.

Use visual aids or diagrams if available to illustrate key points.

Use the Case Studies on the next page to prompt conversation. Read the case studies out loud and ask participants for their thoughts.

Q&A Session

Allow participants to ask questions and seek clarification on any topics covered.

Conclusion

Summarise the main takeaways from the talk. Reiterate the importance of everyone's commitment to safety on the farm.

Closing Remarks

Thank participants for their time and attention.

Remind them to apply the knowledge gained from this toolbox talk in their daily work.

Feedback

Ask for feedback on the Toolbox Talk content and delivery to improve future sessions.

Toolbox Talks

Facilitator Guide

CASE STUDIES



Risk Management Tools

[DOWNLOAD ONLINE MATRIX](#)

Use this simple and effective tool to assess and manage the risk of your farming activities prior to commencing.

All team members can join in and contribute, developing different ways to manage risks on your farm. Doing a risk assessment helps determine hazards and develop appropriate control measures to lessen risks.

farmsafe.org.au

P. +61 2 6269 5622 | E. info@farmsafe.org.au

Disclaimer: This *Toolbox Talk* is intended as a *general* guide only and is designed to be used to increase risk awareness and safe work practices - it is not legal advice and does not take the place of proper individualised on-farm workplace inductions, work, health and safety training, or any other tailored steps which may be necessary to protect health and safety at specific worksites.

CASE STUDY 1 **The Kicking Cow**

Scenario John, an experienced cattle handler, was working in the cattle yards with a group of cows. One of the cows appeared agitated and repeatedly kicked at the animals behind her.

Outcome Unfortunately, John was not concentrating and failed to observe the cow's behaviour. He did not maintain a safe distance and got too close to the kicking cow. He was kicked in the leg and suffered a fractured bone.

| QUESTION | ANSWERS MAY INCLUDE |
|---|--|
| What may have helped to prevent this outcome? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always being aware of cattle behaviour, especially signs of agitation or aggression. • Maintaining a safe distance and avoiding kick zones. • Use low-stress handling techniques to minimise the risk of injury. |

CASE STUDY 2 **The Crush Incident**

Scenario A farm worker, Sarah, put a cow into the crush to be vaccinated. The crush was old and poorly maintained, with a malfunctioning locking mechanism on the headbail.

Outcome During the vaccination, the headbail suddenly opened due to the faulty locking mechanism. The cow rushed out, knocking Sarah over and stepping on her. Sarah sustained a rib fracture and bruises.

| QUESTION | ANSWERS MAY INCLUDE |
|---|--|
| What may have helped to prevent this outcome? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment and yards should be inspected and maintained regularly. • Faults should be repaired before commencing work. |

CASE STUDY 3 **The Trip and Fall**

Scenario Tom, a farm worker, was tasked with drafting cattle through the yards. He was in a rush, so didn't bother to check the yards for trip hazards before he started work.

Outcome As Tom was moving the cattle, one turned back to face him. As he stepped back to give the animal more room, he tripped over some fencing materials that had been left on the ground. In putting his hand out to break the fall, he sustained a wrist fracture.

| QUESTION | ANSWERS MAY INCLUDE |
|---|---|
| What may have helped to prevent this outcome? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspecting the yards prior to use. • Ensuring the yards are cleaned up after repairs are made. |

CASE STUDY 4 **Zoonotic Disease**

Scenario Lisa, a farm worker, had been working cattle in the yards all day. It was a really hot day. To cool down Lisa splashed water from the cattle trough over her face, accidentally getting some in her mouth and on an abrasion on her forearm.

Outcome About 5 days later Lisa suddenly started to feel unwell with fever, severe headache, sore muscles, chills, vomiting, and red eyes. The diagnosis was Leptospirosis.

| QUESTION | ANSWERS MAY INCLUDE |
|---|---|
| Could the water from the cattle trough have been the cause of Lisa's leptospirosis infection? | <p>YES. Leptospirosis can be spread in a number of ways including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exposure to water, soil or mud contaminated with the urine from infected animals. • Through cuts and abrasions on the skins. |
| How could this outcome have been prevented? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using water from a water bottle to wet her face. • Keeping the abrasion on her arm covered. • Wearing a long-sleeved shirt to protect the abrasion. |

Toolbox Talks

Facilitator Guide

INSTRUCTIONS

This sign-off template is available for you to use as part of your training packages. You will need to attach all evidence of all information given to the person that you have spoken with regarding this specific Toolbox Talk. This may include checklists, policies, safe operating procedures or notes about the conversations had, questions asked and other information provided.

Holding Toolbox Talks or safety meetings are not just about checking a box – they need to be tailored to your farming environment, meet the legislative requirements, and designed to support your employee, contractor, family member or visitor throughout the time that they spend living or working on your property. Inductions are only the first step in your WHS journey and it is important that you continue to create a safety culture on your farm by continuing to engage with your employees on any matters that may affect their health, safety and wellbeing.

The employee/contractor/visitor/family member that you have had this conversation with should acknowledge that they have received, discussed and understood all the relevant information that has been presented to them and attached and sign in the relevant space provided. A good practice is to ensure that the employee initials or signs each relevant piece of information that is attached and retains a copy of each for their own information. Records of WHS conversations should be kept alongside records of employment or in your work, health and safety management system and be updated as needed or as required by law.

A Practical Guide

Safe Handling of Cattle in Yards and Pens

On-farm Toolbox Talk

Sign-off Sheet

Please list and/or attach all documents that have been provided including checklists, policies, safe operating procedures, etc.

On-farm Toolbox Talk Participants

EMPLOYER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have provided a relevant safety meeting to our farming business and that the employee has received, discussed and understood the listed and attached information.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

1. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature



Toolbox Talks

Facilitator Guide

A Practical Guide
Safe Handling of Cattle
in Yards and Pens

On-farm Toolbox Talk Sign-off Sheet

CONTINUED



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

This project is supported by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), through funding from the Australian Government's National Farm Safety Education Fund.

2. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

3. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

4. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

5. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature