

Livestock Safety

Animals are a major source of injuries to children in agricultural settings. The size difference between a large animal and a small person, an animal's unpredictability, and children's lack of knowledge or skills puts children at risk. According to a study by Fred Rivara, completed in 1997 from data collected from 1990-1993, animal related, and specifically horseback riding, injuries accounted for 8.4 percent of total farm-related injuries to children ages 0-19.

Children often don't view livestock as dangerous, yet, animals cause numerous fatalities and injuries each year. The National Safety Council ranked beef cattle farms second and dairy operations third among all farming enterprises in injuries per hour of work. Seventeen percent of all farm injuries involved animals.

When working with livestock it is important to realize some of the differences between how animals and humans sense their surroundings. Animal's color perception is in black and white, not color. They have difficulty judging distances. Animals have extremely sensitive hearing and can detect sounds that people can't hear. Loud noises frighten animals and high-frequency sounds hurt their ears. Many of these factors cause animals to respond as skittish and frightened of unfamiliar surroundings. In addition, animals with young are protective by nature and could become dangerous if they perceive you may harm their young.

Chores involving livestock care and handling are often one of the first responsibilities given to children, increasing their exposure to the dangers at an early age.

When working around animals encourage your children to:

- Be calm, move slowly, and avoid loud noises
- Wear steel toed shoes
- Avoid the hind legs of the animal
- Approach large animals at the shoulder
- Avoid animals with newborns
- Avoid stallions, bulls, rams and boars
- Always have an escape route when working with animals in close quarters
- Wear helmets when riding horses



Even though an animal may look friendly, all animals need to be treated with respect. They can be unpredictable. Animals are a great aspect of farm life but they can also be a threat to the safety of those working with them. Teach children to be alert when around livestock.

For additional information on animal safety, see FS4JK's "PAWS 4 Farm Safety" educational packet available through our catalog or at www.fs4jk.org.

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Just Kids