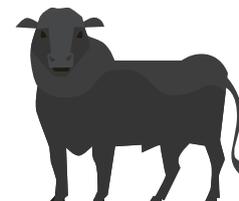




# Safe cattle handling



Every year, many people are hurt by cattle, mostly when cattle kick or crush them. Some get serious injuries, like broken bones, and people have been killed. Cattle have minds of their own, a huge weight advantage and move surprisingly fast. Even skilled cattle handlers take knocks or kicks during their careers.

## KEY POINTS

- > Anyone working with cattle must be appropriately trained and experienced for the task.
- > Keep yards tidy and well maintained.
- > Plan an escape route in advance when working with cattle in the yards.
- > Never get in the race with large cattle. Don't put your arms or legs through the race walls.
- > Don't try to move a dangerous bull on foot or alone.
- > Always wash and dry your hands after working with cattle.

*To assess the major risks and how to control them, see page 2.*

This information sheet applies to anyone handling cattle in both the beef and dairy industries. It outlines the potential risks involved in handling cattle and gives recommendations on how to eliminate, isolate or minimise those risks. WorkSafe NZ accepts these recommendations as current industry good practice. They will help you comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA).

See the full guide at [www.saferfarms.org.nz/guides](http://www.saferfarms.org.nz/guides)

**Accepted Good Practice:** Handling cattle safely is a skill that comes with time and experience. Skilled cattle handlers understand how cattle behave and react. They know where to stand and how to move. They work together and get cattle to do what they want – quietly, smoothly and safely.

KEEP SAFE, KEEP FARMING

SAFERFARMS.ORG.NZ

WORKSAFE  
NEW ZEALAND | MAHI HAUAMARU  
AOTEAROA



**The Law:** The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA) is New Zealand’s work health and safety law. The Act requires that a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) must ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers. The duties of a PCBU apply to all work activities and places work is carried out on a farm.

Employers should also be mindful of their obligations under The Health and Safety in Employment (HSE) Regulations 1995, which say that PCBUs must make sure average work noise levels stay below 85dB(A).

## HEALTH AND SAFETY LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The primary duties of a PCBU include:

- > providing and maintaining a safe work environment, safe plant and structures and safe systems of work
- > providing any information, training, instruction or supervision that is necessary to protect everyone from the health and safety risks at work.

Workers must:

- > take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that their actions or inactions do not harm the health and safety of others
- > co-operate with any reasonable health and safety policy or procedure of the PCBU notified to them and comply with any reasonable instruction given by the PBCU (eg using personal protective equipment).

TABLE OF RISKS	
Risk	Good Practice
<b>MUSTERING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Prepare the route in advance. Open the gates and work out where the cattle are likely to break away, so you can be on guard.</li> <li>&gt; When using a motorbike for mustering cattle, drive slowly and seek terrain where you can clearly see hazards or obstructions. Always wear a helmet.</li> </ul>
<b>WORKING WITH CATTLE IN THE YARDS AND SHED</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Before yarding cattle, make sure the yards are properly set-up and free of debris. Remove any sharp objects that could injure or frighten people or livestock.</li> <li>&gt; Wear steel-capped boots.</li> <li>&gt; Before working with them, leave cattle in the yards for about 30 minutes so they can calm down and become accustomed to surroundings.</li> <li>&gt; Keep cattle calm - limit loud noises like shouting, barking dogs and revving motorbikes. Try to stay out of an animal’s ‘personal space’ around its head.</li> <li>&gt; Plan an escape route in advance.</li> <li>&gt; Never stand in front of a bar used as a slip rail or hock bar behind the last animal. Always stand at the end of the bar, and keep it at arm’s length in case it jerks upward.</li> <li>&gt; Install kick rails in the milking shed. Stay behind the kick rails wherever possible.</li> </ul>
<b>LOADING AND UNLOADING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Maintain the loading ramp and race in good working order. Make sure the animals are fit for transport and loaded correctly.</li> </ul>
<b>DEHORNING/ EARTAGGING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Disbudding of calves or use of polled breeds is recommended.</li> <li>&gt; Never dehorn large cattle when you’re alone in the race.</li> <li>&gt; When ear-tagging, always work from above the animals’ head - never through the rails. For difficult animals and bulls, use a headbail.</li> </ul>

**KEEP SAFE, KEEP FARMING**

**SAFERFARMS.ORG.NZ**

**WORKSAFE**  
NEW ZEALAND | MAHI HAU MARU  
AOTEAROA



TABLE OF RISKS	
Risk	Good Practice
<b>COWS WITH CALVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Do not get between the calf and the mother without a barrier or other protection, especially when weighing or ear-tagging a newborn calf.</li> <li>&gt; If you have to catch a calf, keep it between you and the mother. Try to keep a fence or vehicle between you and the cow.</li> <li>&gt; Avoid lifting calves if possible. If you have to lift a calf, use your legs and keep your back as straight as possible.</li> <li>&gt; Castrate cattle as early as possible.</li> </ul>
<b>ZOONOSES/ VACCINATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Some vaccinations are dangerous to humans and should be only done by a veterinarian.</li> <li>&gt; Manage zoonoses through maintaining a vaccination and parasite control program and by thoroughly washing and drying hands.</li> </ul>
<b>MOVING BULLS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Don't try to move a dangerous bull on foot or alone. Use a ute or tractor, get someone to help, use a well-trained dog, or bring the bull along with a group of steers or cows to help keep it calm.</li> <li>&gt; Always have a waddy and be ready to use it.</li> <li>&gt; If cornered by a bull, don't move too fast. Slowly move out of the bull's 'flight zone'.</li> <li>&gt; Turning and running from the bull invites being chased and they are usually faster.</li> <li>&gt; If there is no escape route, step sideways out of his best vision. This will confuse him.</li> </ul>
<b>DRENCHING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; When drenching, use a pour-on with large cattle if you can. Apply it close to the animal to reduce splash.</li> <li>&gt; Do not get it on your skin.</li> </ul>
<b>WORKING CATTLE THROUGH THE RACE/THE CRUSH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Never get in the race with large cattle. Don't put your arms, head or legs through the race walls.</li> <li>&gt; Work with a partner if you can.</li> <li>&gt; Make sure the cattle have room to move in the forcing pen.</li> <li>&gt; Pack the race firmly to stop the cattle moving back and forth.</li> <li>&gt; If there's a safe and well-maintained catwalk, use it.</li> </ul>

PUBLISHED: JUNE 2016. CURRENT UNTIL REVIEW IN 2018.

KEEP SAFE, KEEP FARMING

SAFERFARMS.ORG.NZ

**WORKSAFE**  
NEW ZEALAND | MAHI HAU MARU  
AOTEAROA

