

# Livestock Safety for Kids

COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION  
SERVICE



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We all love to see children working with livestock. These experiences can provide children with many valuable life lessons, such as responsibility and time management. However, we all need to remember livestock can be dangerous and a source of injuries to children in agricultural settings.

According to the National Safety Council, -17% of all farm injuries involve animals. It is important to realize how those injuries could be prevented.

Animals and humans sense their surroundings very differently; so, it is important to recognize those differences and use that information to help handle animals safely. Cows do not have a good depth perception. Cattle, hogs and sheep have panoramic vision, which means they can see everything around them, except the area directly behind them, known as a blind spot. They also have a fear of shadows, stepping over grid patterns, and unfamiliar surroundings. Livestock have extremely sensitive hearing. This is why loud noises frighten animals. This helps explain why animals can balk or become skittish in unfamiliar surroundings. Finally, animals are very protective of their young and could become dangerous if they perceive harm to their young.

Another important factor to know is the flight zone or comfort zone of the animal. This area can change and depends on how familiar the animal is with people or the person working with the animal. Anyone who enters the flight zone suddenly or without allowing the animal to adapt could be hurt.

All of these differences are why it is important to teach children a few safety measures for when they are around livestock. Whether it be working with them on a daily basis or visiting them for the first time. Here are a few important safety measures:

- Always ask permission before working with or touching animals
- Avoid loud noises and sudden movements
- Wear closed toed shoes, preferably steel toed boots
- Stay away from the legs
- Approach large animals at the shoulder
- Stay away from animals with newborns
- Stay away from bulls, boars, or rams
- Have an escape route when working with animals in close quarters

Following these safety measures can decrease your chances of becoming injured while working with livestock. Remember, be alert and handle animals appropriately. They may look friendly, but they can be dangerous and unpredictable.