

## Cattle Safety<sup>1</sup>

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The majority of beef cattle accidents occur while the victim is handling the livestock. Many of those accidents involve horses and are the result of a rider being thrown or falling from the horse. (See related article on horse safety.)

Bulls, too, are involved in a considerable number of farm accidents, especially aged bulls that were docile as calves. One veteran southwest Kansas horned Hereford breeder learned the hard way just how dangerous a pet bull can be. While he was out checking cattle one day, he found he needed to read the tattoo of the herd bull. It was a bull he had raised himself and it had even been a family pet as a calf.

He told his hired man that he'd just walk over and get the number. He figured that even though the bull was three years old, it had never been aggressive, so approaching it wouldn't be any trouble. When he got to the bull and reached for its ear, it lowered its head and turned it abruptly upward slicing the stockman's leg and femoral artery with its sharp horn. The ensuing scenario was a series of lucky breaks for this gentleman.

His hired man, who was waiting in the pickup, realized the severity of the injury and was able to help the stockman to the truck and drive him to the nearby farmhouse. The stockman's wife, who was a registered nurse, was home and was able to stop the bleeding so they could transport him to the local hospital, five miles away. At the hospital they were fortunate enough to have a doctor who had experience with this type of injury and was able to repair the damage, thus leading to a complete recovery.

This whole series of events took very little time, but if everything hadn't fallen into place just as it did, this could have been a fatal farm accident. One point it clearly emphasizes is to work in pairs whenever possible. One person, the hired man, made all the difference in this case. Had he not been there, the stockman most likely would have bled to death in the pasture.

Temple Grandin, assistant professor of animal science at Colorado State University, warns, "The bull that's going to kill you is the hand-fed, bucket calf. It will be dangerous when it grows up. If you want a safe bull, let the cow raise it."

With the popularity and practicality of artificial insemination many herds can eliminate the need for a bull. This in itself is a safety factor for cattle producers.

Cows with calves are another safety concern. First calf heifers are especially dangerous, says Keith Zoellner, extension beef specialist at Kansas State University, because you have no way of knowing how she will react to motherhood. Zoellner says a good rule of thumb is that if a cow was overprotective of her calf once, then she'll probably do it again. When protecting a calf, cows can be lightning quick if they decide to charge. You may not be able to get away before she gets you. For the older farmer this could mean potentially severe injuries. It is important for anyone working with cow/calf pairs to be aware of the situation and know the signs of an aggressive cow, but this is vitally important for the older stockman, who simply does not react as quickly as he once could.

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