



Cattle Fact Sheet

Occupational Safety and Health Information

General Safety Information for Persons Working with Cattle

The following information is intended to inform individuals who are involved with the care and use of animals about potential hazards (e.g., zoonoses, allergies, injuries) associated with working with various animal species and to provide information as to how they may lessen these hazards (e.g., personal hygiene, personal protective equipment [PPE]).

Zoonotic Diseases of Cattle

Cattle can carry organisms that may cause infection and disease in humans (zoonotic diseases, zoonoses). Exposure to these organisms can come through direct contact with cattle, or indirectly through contact with feces or other bodily fluids or secretions. In general, cattle that receive routine health care (e.g., vaccinations, deworming) and are closely monitored for disease are less likely a source of disease transmission. People who handle cattle should still be aware of a number of important diseases they may carry which include **Rabies**, **Q-Fever**, **Anthrax**, **Brucellosis**, **Leptospirosis**, and gastro-intestinal diseases (**e.g., Salmonellosis**, **Campylobacteriosis**, **E. coli 0157:H7**, **Giardia** and **Cryptosporidia**). Some of these diseases may not produce observable signs of illness in the cow; therefore, if you handle cattle or their wastes you must take appropriate precautions to prevent transmission of these infections.

Injuries from Handling Cattle

Cattle are herd creatures with strong territorial instincts. They may hesitate to move into unknown areas, are sensitive to noise, and are frightened easily. Cattle have poor depth perception. They can see to their sides, but not to their hind quarters, so do not approach from them from the rear. Cattle kick forward and out. Physical injuries to handlers such as back strain can occur from handling and restraining cattle, due to their large size and strength. People with pre-existing back problems may need assistance when handling cattle. Other hazards in indoor and outdoor cattle facilities that can injure cattle handlers include: gates, squeeze chutes, and other hinged caging causing pinched fingers or bruising; overhanging objects; exposed nails or broken pen wire; and electrical shock from hosing pens and walls where light and electrical sockets are not waterproof.



How to Protect Yourself

Wash your Hands: The single most effective preventative measure that can be taken is thorough, regular hand washing. Wash hands and arms after handling cattle. Never eat, drink or smoke in animal areas.

Wear Personal Protective Equipment: Coveralls and covered shoes or boots should always be worn when working with cattle. Dust masks should be worn if you have a history of allergies, if you are inside in dusty areas, or during grooming. If you need to wear respiratory protection, you should be medically cleared before being fit tested with a respirator (if applicable).

Tell your Physician you work with Cattle: Whenever you are ill, even if you are not certain that the illness is work related, always mention to your physician that you work with cattle. Many zoonotic diseases have flu-like symptoms and would not normally be suspected. Your physician needs this information to make an accurate diagnosis. Questions about personal human health should be answered by your physician.

Seek Medical Attention Promptly: If you are injured on the job (e.g., bitten, kicked, stepped on) provide immediate first-aid. Stop the bleeding of wounds and wash the affected areas with soap and water. Where soap and water may not be readily available, use of baby wipes (available in small portable packages) or alcohol-based cleansing gel is acceptable. Alcohol-based gels are neutralized by organic matter so the first application should be wiped off to remove debris, or the area can be cleaned first with a baby wipe, and the next application of gel can be left on the skin.

- Immediately report the incident to your supervisor (if applicable).
- Individuals needing immediate medical treatment for serious injuries should visit the nearest medical treatment facility (e.g., emergency room or urgent care clinic).
- Immediate medical treatment may be required if:
 - An individual's ability to breath properly is affected;
 - Bleeding is excessive and difficult to control;
 - An injury clearly needs sutures; or
 - There is a loss of consciousness associated with the incident.