



PASS it on

Newsletter of Proactive Agricultural Safety & Support Inc

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REMEMBER

ACCIDENTS HURT SAFETY DOESN'T

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ZOONOSES — PREVENTION BETTER THAN CURE

With all the hype around Hendra virus, it's worth understanding the risks when it comes to working, and playing, with animals.

Zoonoses are animal diseases that can spread to humans. About 75% of emerging human infectious diseases are thought to have come from animals, including wildlife. Before panic sets in, while there are many animal-borne diseases that can affect people (more than 200 worldwide), they are relatively uncommon in Australia (about 50) and simple preventative steps can significantly reduce the risks.

Those most at risk include farmers, shearers, abattoir workers, veterinarians and pet owners.

The more commonly known examples of zoonoses, many of which do not occur in Tasmania, include anthrax, Q fever, leptospirosis, listeriosis, campylobacter, *E. coli*, salmonella, toxoplasmosis, scabby mouth (orf), tapeworm, ringworm, hydatids and of course...Hendra virus.

The effects of these diseases can vary in severity from minor irritations, to flu-like symptoms and in the worst cases, death.

Zoonoses may be contracted from animals that are clearly suffering from illness, but also those animals that appear healthy but are carrying the disease organism.

Prevention the best approach

The risk of being affected by animal-borne, or other infectious diseases, can be significantly reduced by paying attention to personal hygiene and protection, reducing exposure to disease and managing both human and animal health.

Personal health and hygiene:

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap for at least 10 seconds under running water after contact with animals, before putting your hands near your face, eating, preparing food or after using the toilet.
- Hand sanitisers can be used effectively if water is unavailable, however they have their limitations and washing with soap and water is preferable when hands are visibly soiled with dirt or blood or other bodily fluids.
- Shower and change into clothing and footwear regularly, particularly after frequent contact with animals.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle to support a healthy immune system.



Risky business: Farmers and veterinarians working closely with livestock need to manage the risk of contracting animal-borne diseases (zoonoses).

- Ensure you and your co-workers are up to date with relevant vaccinations (for example, tetanus and Q fever).
- Promptly attend to cuts and abrasions and keep them covered, replacing dressings and plasters regularly.
- Seek medical attention if a zoonosis is suspected or exposure is known.

Reduce exposure:

- Use personal protection equipment (PPE) such as overalls, gloves, eye protection and masks, particularly where exposure to animal tissues and excreta of fluids is likely.
- Keep equipment (for example, vaccinating guns and needles) clean and in good working order.
- Take particular care when working with sick animals (although healthy animals can also transmit disease).
- Keep animals and animal health products, such as vaccines, out of the kitchen.

Manage animal health:

- Vaccinate and worm livestock and pets as appropriate
- Control animal movement (livestock, horses, working and pet dogs).
- Control vertebrate pests (for example, cats and wild dogs).
- Manage hygiene with livestock feeds where possible to reduce exposure to animals such as cats and rodents.
- Isolate sick animals to reduce the risk of disease spreading to other animals and people.
- Dispose of carcasses appropriately to prevent disease spread and recurrence. ■

Source: adapted from Zoonoses — animal diseases transmissible to humans (NSW DPI)

More information

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/health/humans/zoonoses

HANDLING LIVESTOCK SAFELY

Many people have been injured when handling livestock — animals are unpredictable. Physically, many are larger, heavier and stronger than people. Operator safety during livestock handling is paramount.

Major risks include:

- Being injured by frightened or startled animal or a mother protecting its young.
- Being injured due to poorly maintained or designed equipment.
- Developing allergies to animal hair or secretions such as saliva, urine and secretions of various glands associated with animal skin.
- Acquiring diseases and microorganisms collectively called zoonoses (for example, ringworm).
- Harmful effects of animal health products (for example, internal and external parasite chemicals) and the equipment and techniques used to administer the products (see box story next page).

Get to know your livestock

A basic understanding of animal behaviour will dramatically reduce the risk of injury. Livestock such as cattle and sheep have four key zones of influence — *flight zone*, *point of balance*, *blind spot* and *kick zone* (see Figure 1).

An animal's **flight zone** is its discomfort zone. When a person enters this zone, the animal will turn away in order to escape. If an animal turns and faces a person, the person is outside this flight zone. Always aim to work on the edge of the flight zone.

Working in the flight zone can cause an animal to become agitated. If this occurs move backwards away from the animal.

Flight zone is determined by several interacting factors (see Table 1).

The **point of balance** is in the chest area. To cause an animal to move forward, stand behind the point of balance (see Figure 2).

To cause the animal to back up, stand in front of the point of balance.

Cattle, sheep and pigs will move forward in a race when a handler passes by the animal in the opposite direction of the desired animal movement.

All grazing animals have wide-angle vision, but also a **blind spot**, which is directly behind them (see Figure 3).

An animal's **kick zone** is the area that can be reached by the hind legs with a kicking motion.

The blind spot and kick zone vary from one species of animal to the next.

Most animals have excellent memories and learn quickly.

“Training young animals to the presence of people on the ground or on horseback, walking among them produces calmer adult animals. Train in small steps over many days, keeping training periods short. 10–15 minutes per day is ideal.”

Temple Grandin, Professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University, United States.

Table 1 Factors that affect the flight zone

Animals with smaller flight zones	Animals with larger flight zones
Calm behaviour:	Frightened, excited, nervous, aggressive:
• Genetic trait	• Wild animals
• Used to human interaction	• Seldom see people
• Positive handling experiences	• Negative handling experiences
• Familiar surroundings and procedures	• Unfamiliar surroundings or procedures

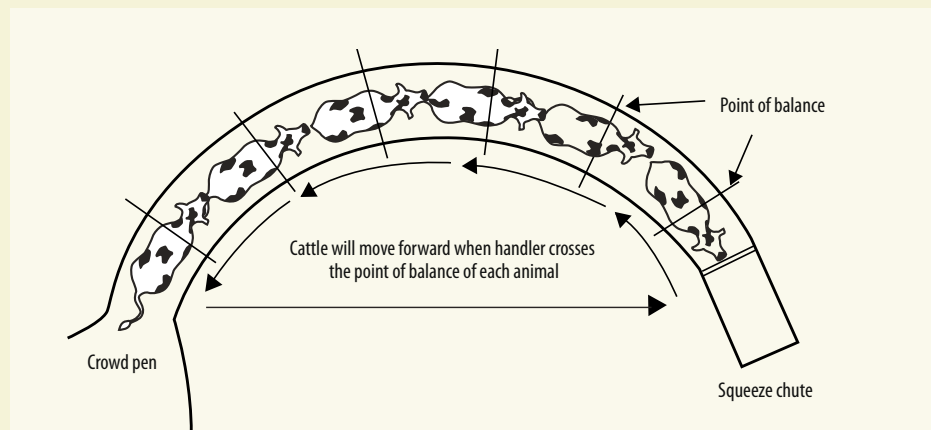


Figure 2 The affect of point of balance on animal movement
(Source: Temple Grandin)

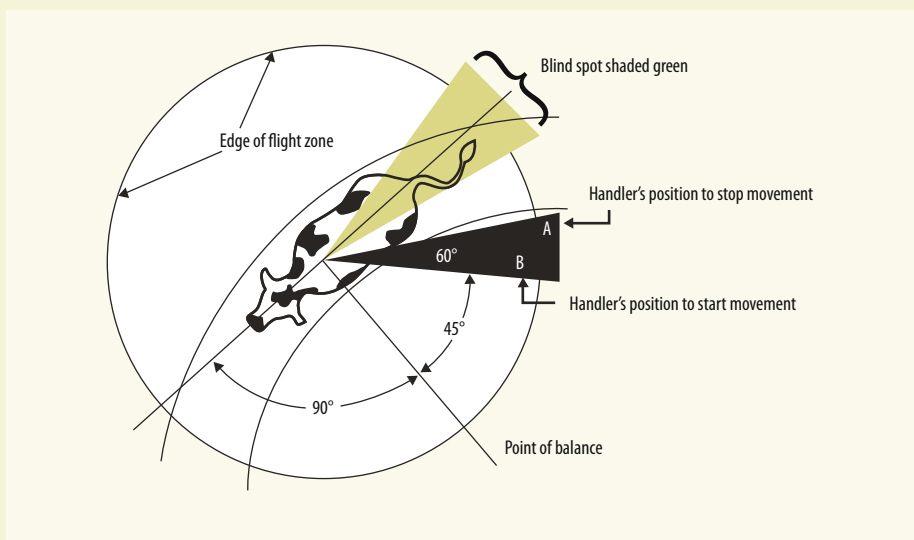


Figure 1 Zones of influence in livestock
(Source: Temple Grandin)

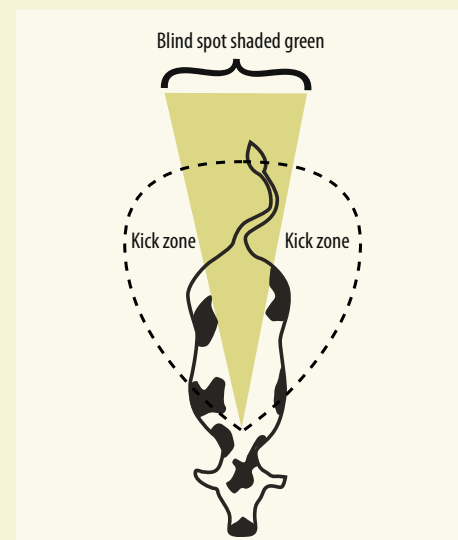


Figure 3 Blind spot and kick zones
(Source: Temple Grandin)



TIPS AND HINTS

- Calm animals move quietly.
- Avoid startling the animal
 - ✓ Speak softly and calmly, in a low tone of voice — avoid shouting.
 - ✓ Announce your presence well in advance of getting close.
 - ✓ Be calm and deliberate with your actions.
 - ✓ Avoid sudden quick movements, sudden loud noises and moving shadows.
- Use the principles of flight zone behaviour to move stock into a yard in a calm and orderly manner.
- Stay out of the blind spot behind a steer's rear end. If he cannot see you, he is likely to kick you!
- Avoid getting animals excited. It takes up to 30 minutes for an animal to calm down and its heart rate to return to normal after rough handling.
- Never chase an escaped animal — it will return to the herd.
- Have well-designed facilities that:
 - ✓ Promote free flow of the animals, such as curved races and yards.
 - ✓ Have solid sides to encourage calm animals and prevent them seeing handlers.
 - ✓ Incorporate many escape points for humans.
- Keep facilities in good repair, which includes:
 - ✓ Non-slip surface on floors and footings on chutes and ramps.
 - ✓ Slopes on ramps have a gradual slope at an angle of 20 degrees or less.
 - ✓ Lighting should be even and diffused to eliminate glare.
- Do not overfill holding pens:
 - ✓ Keep three-quarters or half-full, so stock can move easily and be drafted quietly.
 - ✓ Always have an escape route if working in a confined space with livestock.
- Wear appropriate clothing and footwear including:
 - ✓ Lace-up or elastic-sided boots with steel toe-caps to protect your feet.
 - ✓ Long trousers and shirt sleeves (shirt tails tucked into trousers).
- Provide adequate ventilation — dust is common in livestock operations. Wear a mask in dusty conditions.
- Pad gates with rubber stops to prevent clanging and banging. Hydraulic equipment should be engineered for low noise.

Safe and effective: Calm, deliberate movements reduce the risk of startling livestock during routine handling operations.

Patience is a virtue

Animals:

- Have wide-angle vision.
- Have a reduced ability to perceive depth and to judge distances.
- Have extremely sensitive hearing relative to people, especially to higher-frequency sounds.
- Can see sudden movements behind, but cannot distinguish how close the perceived 'threat' is nor can they determine the seriousness of the movement.
- Most animals are colour-blind.
- Move readily from dark to lighter areas and are reluctant to move from light into dark areas.
- Do not like looking directly into the sun.
- Bright spots and shadows tend to make animals skittish.
- Move more easily and are less likely to be difficult to remove from a pen when calm.

- Are dangerous when:
 - A single animal is frantically attempting to rejoin its herd.
 - Sudden novel sight or sound (for example, balloons fluttering, sight of a reflection).
 - Protecting their young, particularly newborn. Disposition deteriorates with age and number of births. ■

Reference

1. Temple Grandin PhD: *Safe handling of large animals (cattle and horses)*, Occupational Medicine: April 1999 Vol 14 No. 2.

More information

Kondinin Group publication *Handling the Herd — a complete guide to cattle yard design and modification*. www.kondinigroup.com.au

STORING VACCINES — BEST PRACTICE

Question: *Is it safe to store partially used vaccine in the family fridge?*

Answer: *It is NOT good practice to store any veterinary product in the family food fridge. It is best to have a fridge dedicated to storing veterinary products.*

If partially used vaccine package is contaminated with other substances (dirt/ animal blood) and must be stored in the family fridge, place it in a double bag before placing in a sealed container in the fridge.

NEAR MISS — PROACTIVE APPROACH SAVES LIFE

After 23 years of working with livestock and carrying out routine activities such as drenching and vaccinating, a local livestock manager is lucky to be alive after a recent poisoning incident.

"We were in the middle of drenching and my staff were trying to get through a mob of 4500 sheep," he said.

"The drench gun was playing up and the team was frustrated and keen to get through the mob as quickly as possible. I popped up to the paddock to lend a hand and cleaned out the gun with water and my bare hands."

"I'm not sure whether I inhaled the drench or absorbed some of the product through a splash on my skin, but as I drove away from the paddock my vision started to blur."

"Within a minute or so I was dry retching, the mountains started to come toward me in waves and the dashboard was on the end of my nose — I knew I was in trouble."

"I rang the drenching team and asked them to bring the drench container to meet me and the manager picked me up and drove me to the local hospital 20km away."

"We rang ahead and told the hospital staff we were coming and contacted the poisons

information number to have information on hand when we arrived."

"By the time we reached the hospital I needed a wheelchair — I could only just hear what the doctor was saying by this time."

"I spent the next eight hours on a drip and my heart was regularly monitored as my heart rate was dangerously low."

"Although I have recovered to a large extent, blood tests have revealed my liver is in poor shape and chemical levels in my blood are high. Whether this is from the incident or a build-up is unclear. I still suffer from dizzy spells and get nauseous if I become overheated."

"Needless to say we no longer use this drench and I use gloves when drenching and cleaning out the drenching equipment."

"The drench is common, but even when we chose it, our veterinary consultant advised us it was a very "nasty" product" — he's right!"

"I am well aware of how lucky I am — lucky we were quick to act, rang ahead so hospital staff were prepared on my arrival and lucky the doctor knew this particular poison (he came across the product before in India where he had seen it used as an intentional poison in suicide cases)." ■

CHAIRMAN'S WORD

This issue of the *Pass it on* newsletter has focussed on safety issues surrounding livestock handling and management.

All too often we become complacent and forget that livestock, the equipment used to treat and manage them and the animal health products involved can all be hazards if not managed with respect.

National quad bike fatalities

Unfortunately, 2011 is a noteworthy year — this year is heading towards a record number of farm fatalities (see Table 1). And, it is the first time that quad bike deaths have eclipsed tractor deaths — at a ratio of 3:1.

Quad bike fatalities to date this year include four children — three 11-year-olds and a four-year-old. Some were not wearing helmets, some were riding quad bikes unsupervised and others were supervised by adults. One 11-year-old was engaged in "work" moving cows.

It is important to note that WorkSafe Victoria spokesman Michael Birthas said:

"Helmets are required when using quad-bikes in a farm environment, and they make really good sense if you are riding recreationally because they can make an enormous difference."

Table 1 National farm fatalities year to date (mid October, 2011)

Total on-farm fatalities	Total quad bike fatalities (on and off farm)	Total quad bike fatalities (on-farm only)
43	19	14

Source: Tony Lower, Sydney University

Recent PASS activities

- 1. Safe and effective livestock vaccination workshops:** These very popular workshops, coordinated by a multidisciplinary team delivered theory and practical skills on livestock and operator safety, effective vaccinating of lambs and weaners with Gudair for protection against Ovine Johne's disease (OJD), plus information on NLIS documentation. For more information and copies of the needlestick injury management guide visit the SheepConnect and PASS websites, www.pass.org.au and www.tiar.tas.edu.au/extensive/sheepconnect
- 2. Legal issues in workplace health and safety for rural enterprises in Tasmania:** Fred Lester delivered this informative lecture at the PASS AGM on 14 October. Fred is a lawyer with extensive experience in workplace health and safety.
- 3. Better Work Tasmania forums:** PASS contributed to the discussions at forums specifically for the Agricultural industries held during late September. WorkCover Tasmania has consulted all industries with the view of creating a state-wide strategy to improve workplace health and safety for all workers including volunteers. ■

HOW ARE WE GOING?

PASS and our sponsors would like to know if we are providing value to readers through the newsletter. Please fill in the survey below and return to us by post, fax or email by 25 November.

Include your contact details and you will go into the draw to win a quad bike helmet.

Send reply to:

Post: P.O. Box 111, Evandale 7212

Fax: (03) 6398 6206

Email: info@pass.org.au

SURVEY

Time and effort is donated by volunteers to create this newsletter.

Please complete this survey to help us to plan for the future — circle your answers.

- 1) Do you read *Pass it on*? YES NO SOME
- 2) Is the information:
 - a. Relevant to farmers? YES NO SOME
 - b. Valuable? YES NO SOME
- 3) Suggest ways to improve:

Thank you for completing this survey.

WHAT'S NEW?

- Farm Safety is Fun** — DVD aimed at raising awareness in young children about safety on farm. Cost: \$50
Available from:
E: vickicon@westnet.com.au
T: (03) 5728 1694
www.safetyaroundfarmseducation.com
- Quad bike safety** — keep up to date on the latest in the safety debate:
 - a. *Safety of quad bikes and side-by-side vehicles on Australian farms* — an updated and revised practical management guide Available from Farmsafe Australia:
T: (02) 6752 8218
www.farmsafe.org.au or download from www.aghealth.org.au/index.php?id=5040
 - b. *It's time for quad bike manufacturers to rollover on safety* article from: theconversation.edu.au/its-time-for-quad-bike-manufacturers-to-rollover-on-safety-3421
 - c. WorkSafe Victoria publications:
 - i. Quad bikes on farms (PDF 10875kb) updated October 2011 with a checklist
 - ii. Quad bikes — Operators wearing helmets (PDF 102kb)
 - iii. Quad bikes — Attachments, loads and towing (PDF 278kb) published 2010.
T: 1800 136 089
www.worksafe.vic.gov.au
- Safe injecting** — video clip available from: www.pass.org.au go to the *events* page.
- Asbestos information website** — This easy-to-use website has information on identification, removal and disposal of asbestos, disease, compensation scheme and how to manage asbestos.
www.asbestos.tas.gov.au
- Tasmanian Legislation** — *Work Health and Safety Bill 2011* as part of the harmonisation process for nationally-consistent laws, regulations and codes of practices to start 1 January 2012. More information: www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au
- Refuelling petrol-powered portable generator** — Worksafe Vic safety alert www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/wsinternet/worksafe/home/forms+and+publications/alerts/petrol+powered+portable+generators

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