
Farm Animal Safety for Young People

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Most farms have some animals and most people like and enjoy animals. However, animals are the second most likely cause of injury on the farm after farm machinery accidents. Following a few simple rules should allow young people and ourselves to safely enjoy farm animals .

Farm Animal Behavior

Large farm animals behave based on their instincts as prey animals. They have survived by reacting quickly to situations that may threaten them. Their eyes are on the sides of their head and they can see most of the way around themselves. However, they do have a blind spot directly behind themselves and while their vision is good at detecting movement, it is not good at identifying the details of what is moving and whether or not the movement actually represents a threat. Farm animals are also not very good at determining how far away things are. Farm animals have a good sense of hearing but often cannot determine whether an unfamiliar sound is a threat or not. Farm animals react to sudden unfamiliar sights or noises by moving quickly away or by trying to protect themselves by kicking, butting or biting. The animals most likely to cause injury are intact males, such as bulls, who are naturally aggressive, mothers with new babies who are naturally protective. Sick animals and animals separated from their group may be naturally defensive. Wild animals may not behave the way we expect if they feel trapped or threatened. Any animal as big as some of these animals are may accidentally cause injury. Finally, some individual animals may be more aggressive than others. Young people should never be allowed around these animals except in the company of an adult.

Ideas that may help prevent injuries in young people around farm animals

Dress properly around farm animals with sturdy shoes, long pants and leather gloves if needed. Avoid open toed shoes.

Never approach an unfamiliar animal alone.

When approaching farm animals, always have an escape plan in mind.

Make sure the animals can see and hear your approach. Speak calmly and approach slowly.