

Are Your Cattle Handling Facilities In Good Shape?

James B. Neel
Professor of Animal Science and Extension Beef Cattle Specialist
The University of Tennessee

How safe are your cattle handling facilities? Are they in the state of repair that will allow the cattle to be worked easily and with reduced potential risk of injury to both you and your cattle?

Producers working cattle should be aware that there is the possibility of personal injury, especially if the facilities are not in a good state of repair. Most cattle are normally calm but, when brought into an unfamiliar environment and frightened, they are capable of causing injury to the workers and themselves.

Mature cattle are heavy, strong and easily excitable. Facilities that are in a “poor state of repair” or constructed of “panels or gates” that were not intended for working cattle are dangerous.

If there is a “weak spot” in facilities, brood cows will find it. If they detect “a give” in the facilities, they will quickly determine if they can “break out.” If facilities are in a good state of repair and do not indicate a possible “break out” site, the cow(s) will settle down and can be worked.

With the USDA ruling regarding “downer” cows, an injury to an animal could result in either a severe discount or non-acceptance of crippled cattle at local livestock markets that might be a “downer” before the animal reaches the harvest site. This is another economic reason for maintaining handling facilities and keeping equipment in a good state of repair.

Before working cattle, check the facilities. Be sure they are safe and strong and the risk of injury is low. If needed, make repairs. Don’t attempt to work cattle if facilities are not in a good state of repair.