

## ***Milking***

**Today's dairy cows are generally bigger than those found on farms 20 years ago. However, regardless of a cow's size, milking puts a person in close contact with the animal and exposes the handler to potential risk.**

**Unlike beef cattle which may spend a large portion of their time on pasture or feedlot away from regular, physical human contact, dairy cows are handled by people daily. Generally, this can result in the animals being quieter and more gentle. However, one should not assume that an animal who is used to people does not pose any threat.**

**Cattle that are milked in a parlour are less liable to inflict damage due to the fact that rails and shields are often present to protect against kicking. Care must be taken though when moving cattle through the parlour. Do not get in the way of animals that are moving. Parlour gates should ideally also have rubber bumpers to prevent slamming. Loud clanging noises can startle the animals causing unsafe conditions.**

**Cows that are milked in a tie stall/pipeline system have more chances to kick at a person who is milking. Treating all cattle gently goes a long way to preventing injuries. However, it is not enough. A milker must stay focussed to be alert of any changes in a cow's temperament.**

**Mastitis presents a situation where extra care must be taken. Treating or stripping a cow with mastitis is very painful to the animal. The cow will kick at whatever seems to be causing the pain. If the infected quarter is on the left side, the cow will kick out with her left leg. The handler must be careful not to be caught off balance.**



## ***Ear Tagging***



**Ear tags are an effective way to identify cattle. Since the implementation of federal regulations requiring cattle to be identified with bar codes, etc, ear tags have become not only a management tool, but also a mandatory requirement.**

**Tagging calves as newborns ensures positive identification. However, the dam may become very defensive over her new offspring. If the cow and calf are in a maternity pen, it may be advisable to temporarily separate the pair. Incorporating a locking head gate into the pen would ensure safety.**

**For cattle that have calved outdoors on a pasture, approaching the cow and calf may put the handler in a dangerous situation. Never approach these animals if working alone. Have a partner available who is capable of providing assistance and can be on the lookout for potential danger.**

**Aside from a protective mother, a newborn calf can be tagged without much risk. However, if older cattle are being tagged then special considerations must be made.**



**Whether the animal is being tagged with a CCIA (Canadian Cattle Identification Agency) approved identification tag or a fly control tag, never overlook the size of the animal.**

**Utilize an efficient holding area/chute/holding gate system to isolate individual cattle for tagging. Do not assume that all head gates are sufficient restraint for ear tagging. Also use a properly fitting halter to securely immobilize the head. This will prevent any sudden, violent head movement that may result in injury.**

**Do not bend your body, especially your head, to get close. Keep yourself at a safe, workable arms length from any cattle.**



## ***Dehorning***

**When it comes to dehorning cattle, head restraint becomes very important. Ideally, a head gate equipped with a nose bar can hold the animal securely and protect the handler from injury.**

**If a head gate is not available, ensure the animal has a properly fitting halter. Not only should the halter be the appropriate size for the animal, it is important that the halter be worn properly (See section on proper halter usage.)**

**After a halter has been attached properly, tie the animal's head low. An animal with its head tied down has less ability to toss its head and hurt someone than one tied at a higher level.**

## ***Internal Examinations***

**Performing an internal examination on a large animal requires the handler to be in close proximity to the animal. If the animal suddenly turns or kicks, painful injury may occur.**

**This situation requires that good restraint be available. Putting the animal into a head gate and chute holds the animal securely and prevents turning of its hind quarters. A kick bar behind the animals' rear legs prevents the leg from causing harm to the handler.**

**If a head gate is not an option for examinations, ensure that the animal is located in an area that prevents movement from side to side.**



## **Foot trimming**



**Feet and legs play a crucial role in an animal's productivity. Foot trimming provides farmers with an opportunity to prolong an animals longevity by reducing stress to the feet and legs.**

**Understandably, trimming hooves puts the handler in a high risk situation. To reduce the risk of an injury, the foot trimmer must restrain the foot, preventing any possibility of the animal kicking.**

**# A specially designed hoof-trimming stall is an ideal method to retain the animal. Side rails and non slip footing provide stability for the animal's and trimmer's safety. Hoof trimming stalls require a high bar at the end of the stall to which ropes or straps can be attached for lifting and holding the rear leg. A low platform with straps on each side of the stall at the front allows the trimmer to lift and secure front feet.**

**# If working with electric grinders, wear eye and face protection to safeguard against flying residue.**

**# Be careful to avoid back strain.**

***Whenever possible, hire a professional foot trimmer.***

**Sometimes, there are circumstances where a foot trimming stall is not an option. In these cases, it is important to know the proper, safe way to work around an animal's foot.**

**If a leg needs to be lifted for examination, etc, a long rope with a quick-release snap is an effective tool.**

**Hang the rope over a secure beam or pole directly over the animal's hip. Wrap the end of the rope with the snap around the inside of the leg, beginning at the back of the leg.**



**Pull the rope carefully, lifting the leg. The leg must be straight up and down to keep the animal still. If the leg is pulled out to the back, the animal may feel off balance and will move about or try to kick.**



**This is an example of a leg lifter that is improperly attached. Instead of going around the inside of the leg, the rope first went around the outside of the leg. As a result, the rope slides up the inside of the leg, instead of lifting it. Note also that the rope coming from the overhead beam is twisted. This will make the rope difficult to slide, hindering the lifting process.**

## Halters

Halters are quick, inexpensive ways to restrain livestock. However, improper halter use may result in situations where accidents may occur.

Ensure that halters are put on an animal correctly to maintain optimum control. Halters are designed to apply pressure under the chin of an animal to be most effective.

If a halter is on properly, there is little chance of it slipping off. An animal being led or restrained that suddenly finds itself without a halter may pose a risk to the handler.

This is an example of a properly worn halter. The rope applies pressure under the jaw for maximum control. There is no chance of this halter slipping off.



Below is an example of an improperly worn halter. The pressure is applied behind the ears. This causes the halter to slide up over the eye. It also makes it difficult to tighten the halter, increasing the possibility of it slipping off.



**Discard halters that show signs of fraying or wear.**