Safe Livestock Handling for Youth

Lance R. Miller

The unpredictable nature and large size of livestock can make handling them a dangerous chore, especially for youth. The two most important things when handling livestock are the safety of the human and the animals. Temple Grandin is quoted as saying “Understanding the behaviors of animals helps prevent injuries to both people and animals.”

There are a number of human actions that will help to keep livestock calm and easier to handle and equally as many actions that will cause an animal to get excited and increase the risk of injury. Here are a few things to be conscious of when working with livestock:

- Animals have “flight zones” and will move in response to those – very gentle animals (like 4-H projects) are likely to have very small or no flight zones
- Slow movements will help keep the livestock calm
- Refrain from creating loud noises and yelling
- Avoid using electric prods
- Bright spots and shadows will create areas where animals will stall or balk

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- Create and correctly utilize facilities and tools to aid in moving and handling livestock – these include:
  - Pig boards, a small plastic bag, nylon flags, gates, chutes, trained cattle or sheep dogs, and horses
- Calm and controlled handling will often get the job done as quick and with less risk of injury to both the animal and the people
- Animals that are injured, are protecting their young, and intact males (bulls, stallions, rams, boars) tend to be more aggressive and require more caution
- Always wear appropriate clothing and footwear when you are working with livestock
- Stay focused on the task at hand – livestock can startle and become aggressive quickly

Texas AgriLife Extension Service, the SW Ag Center, and the University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler have created a nice youth-based livestock safety training program that can be obtained for free. The program is called “Right from the Start: Safety Awareness for the Next Generation of Livestock Producers”. They have all the resources already created to teach safe livestock handling practices to 4-H aged youth.

- Here is a link with some of the “Right from the Start” videos
  - [http://www.youtube.com/user/swagcenter1/videos?view=0](http://www.youtube.com/user/swagcenter1/videos?view=0)

- Here is the link for the “Right from the Start” program materials
  - [http://www.swagcenter.org/resourcesrftsmaterials.asp](http://www.swagcenter.org/resourcesrftsmaterials.asp)

- Here are a few other livestock handling and youth safety programs
  - Farm Safety 4 Just Kids
  - Dr Temple Grandin
  - North American Guidelines for Children’s Agricultural Tasks (NAGCAT)
Talking Points
Scott Lake

Prep For the Cold
Make sure your cows are nutritionally ready
By Gilda V. Bryant
Photo by Lucie Wiese

Minerals are important for herd health, reproduction and efficiency during winter. However, that is only part of the picture. Extra protein and energy are vital during cold, wet weather. Producers should also be aware of forage and by-product supplementation quality, as well as body condition scores.

The remainder of the article can be found at:
http://workingranchtv.com/article/66

Value the Vaccination
This is one procedure you don’t want to mess up
By Loretta Sorenson
Photo by Malloree Barnes

Injecting vaccine into a calf doesn’t necessarily mean the animal receives maximum protection from disease. At numerous points between when the vaccine leaves the supplier and when it enters the animal, quality and effectiveness of the shot can be reduced if it’s not handled carefully.

The remainder of the article can be found at:
http://workingranchtv.com/article/77
Fetal Programming
Importance of Proper Nutrition in Early Pregnancy
By Heather Smith Thomas

What a pregnant cow eats during early gestation can have long-lasting effects on her calf. Most of the organs and body systems of the fetus, including muscle characteristics, are formed during that time.

The remainder of the article can be found at:
http://www.westerncowman.com/2012/August/fetal_programming.html

Effects of a Freeze on Forages
By Bruce Anderson

If you haven’t experienced a freeze yet this fall, you soon will. When plants freeze, changes occur in their metabolism and composition that can poison livestock. But you can prevent problems.

The remainder of the article can be found at:
http://www.agweb.com/article/effects_of_a_freeze_on_forages/

Sheep and Wool News
Robert Stobart

Mr. Brent Larson, the shepherd for the last 7 years resigned last summer and has taken a position with Purina Corp in Brookings South Dakota. Brent added a new dimension to our sheep program and he will be missed. We wish him and his wife Gwen much success in their future endeavors.

The position was advertised and 3 candidates were selected for interviews, which will occur Wednesday, October 24th. A new shepherd will be selected shortly after the interviews. Ms. Kalli Koepke is the temporary shepherd, Kalli worked with Brent for several years while getting her degree so is quite familiar with the sheep and how the program operates.

The 2012-2013 Ram Test has started; we have 99 rams entered on the test. Those who are interested in following the rams’ performance can view the ram test website: http://www.uwyo.edu/ram-test/index.html. Dr. Scott Lake is the faculty advisor; Ms. Kalli Koepke is in charge of the day to day management of the rams.
West Nile Virus in Equine

By Amy McLean

Have you considered vaccinating your horse for West Nile? Several reported and confirmed cases of this deadly disease carried by mosquitoes belonging to the genus *Culex* were diagnosed in the state of Wyoming for 2012. The common house mosquito belongs to this genus. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) cases of West Nile have been reported in 48 states but no confirmed cases for Hawaii and Alaska. Owners can prevent this deadly disease in horses by taking preventative measures such as vaccinating against the disease as well as decreasing areas that would promote mosquito breeding and by protecting their equine with fly sheets, masks and by using fly spray. The West Nile vaccine is considered to be a core vaccine. A core vaccine refers to a vaccine that should be given on a regular basis (annual and possibly followed by a booster) due to average to high risks for all equine. By administering the West Nile vaccine to your horse you will help build your horse’s immune system by promoting the production of antibodies that will protect him against this deadly virus.

One of the main concerns with horses that do become infected by this mosquito borne disease is the fact it’s a neurological disease and symptoms appear to be similar to an animal that maybe rabid. The brain of the horse may swell causing a condition called encephalitis. Encephalitis causes a horse to show signs of ataxia meaning a loss or lack of coordination. Horses with neurological diseases may also appear to be depressed and press their heads against a stationary object. Signs of depression in equine include lack of appetite and not socializing with the herd.

A report by the Gluck Equine Research Center at the University of Kentucky have shown that 91% of the cases from 2005-11 were confirmed in horses that had not been vaccinated. If you have not vaccinated your horse for West Nile consult with your veterinarian about a proper vaccination schedule to help protect your horse against this deadly disease. The cost to vaccinate for West Nile is considerably less than the costs to treat a horse for a neurological disease. Also, consider vaccination protocols for other deadly diseases that are carried by mosquitoes such as Equine encephalomyelitis. Also, consider vaccinating against rabies, which of course is not spread by mosquitoes but is a neurological disease that can be prevented by an annual vaccine. Rabies has been reported in the State of Wyoming and confirmed in Equine. If your horse is diagnosed with rabies then your horse will have to be put down. So, try and prevent these deadly diseases by vaccinating in the winter, a booster in the Spring, especially if you are traveling or exposing your horse to other horses where the immune system maybe compromised and then again in the Fall.