

Cattle Handling in Marts and Lairages

Information Sheet¹

Oct 2010

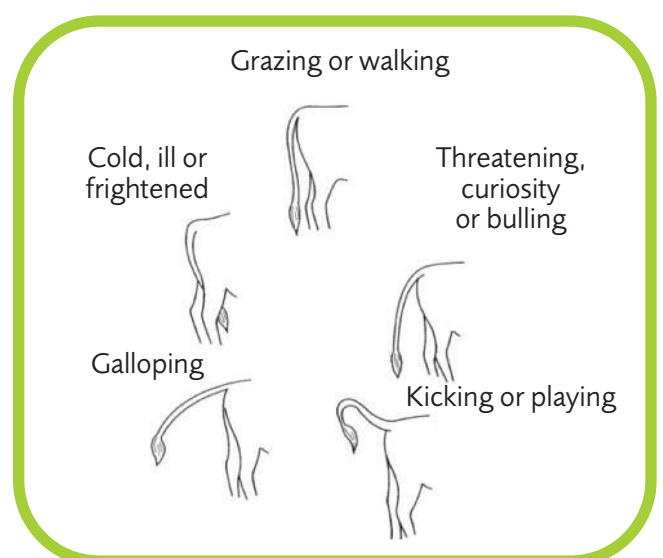
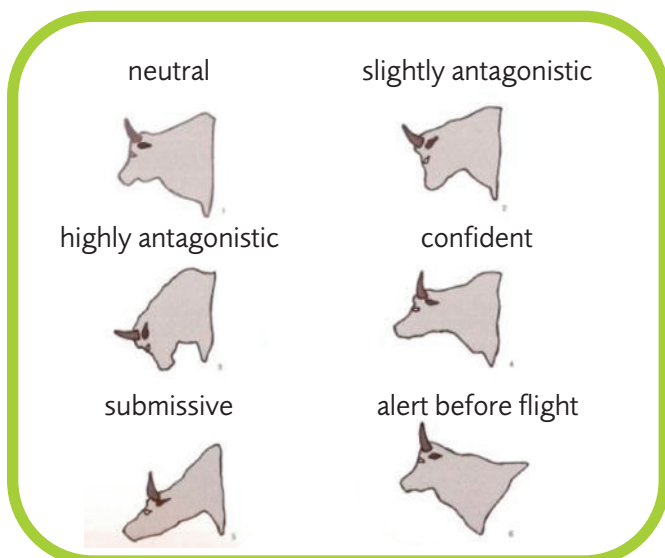
- Livestock Marts and the Lairages of Abattoirs present a unique set of health and safety risks.
- There are large numbers of cattle in unfamiliar surroundings.
- There have been many accidents and large numbers of 'safety incidents'. Some accidents have been fatal.
- Calm and controlled cattle handling is always safer. Your safety and that of others is largely in your own hands.

- This simple guidance is for everyone in Marts and Lairages, whether workers or farmers.



Watch for the Danger Signs

Anxious cattle are a real threat. They may retreat, take flight or attack. They will not typically attack unless they think there is no other option.



Watch for:

- Their Head Position
- Their Tail Position
- Bellowing Loudly – a Sure Sign of Distress
- Pouring the Ground
- All Bulls
- All Cows with Calves at Foot
- Wild Cattle
- Horned Cattle
- All Highly Aroused Cattle



¹This leaflet is a summary of the "Guidance on Safe Operation of Marts and Lairages" available at www.hsa.ie

Dangers with Unloading and Loading

- There must be no chance of livestock escaping by slipping between the vehicle and the side railings. If necessary, reposition the vehicle so that it is correctly lined up with no gaps.
- Only release them when the staff and gates are ready.



Don't leave gaps like this

- Tell staff if there are wild, fractious, distressed, injured or horned cattle, or bulls present before they are released from the transport. Information about dangerous cattle must be given to all relevant persons.



This truck is well positioned – there is no chance of escape

- Cattle which might injure each other on account of their sex, age or origin should be penned separately.

- When opening the rear door/ramp step aside either behind the gate or to a refuge point at the side. Do not walk down the pen in front of them.



Loading should always be ordered, controlled and calm

- There must not be other persons standing at the side of the exit ramp in the side vision of the cattle. This can cause them to stop.

- During unloading do not frighten or excite the cattle, raising their arousal level.

- Once the rear door/ramp is open, do not rush them. They will always leave the transport. Be patient!

- If you need to climb on top of the trailer, be absolutely sure you can't fall, either in with the cattle or to the ground².
- Never enter the trailer to turn them unless an animal has 'gone down' and an assessment is needed.
- The risk of escape is much higher if the trailer or lorry is unsuitable. Discourage use of transport without ramps or side-gates.



He's not too sure - thinking about it - the handler must keep patient and in control

Shifting and Sorting Them



Will I still be able to work tomorrow?

- Only experienced, competent and agile stock handlers should do this work.
- There must be enough persons to do the work. If necessary, wait until they are available.
- Farmers should not help unless specifically asked.
- Open the gates ahead and latch them as you go.
- Keep livestock as calm as possible and where possible in their herd groups.
- Always plan your escape route. How do I survive if attacked/cornered?
- Never mix bulls from different herds.
- Never trust any bull.
- Do not overload the sorting pens; the cattle must have somewhere to move.
- Minimise your direct and up close contact.
- Use a stick or sorting paddle to direct and separate them. Use their "balance lines" to direct them.

² Maintain 3 points of contact at all times



“Sorting Paddles” are a good alternative to a stick

- Working from above off a raised catwalk is good practice for identification or marking. Never place your arms or hands through the rails.
- Keep wild/fractious cattle in a group as long as possible.
- There must be no tripping hazards – clear them away first.

Moving Around – Inspecting the Cattle



- Let the staff work unhindered.
- Instructions of the mart or lairage staff must be followed.
- Shift out of the way when cattle are being moved. Don't stand in places where you are at risk or the movement of the cattle is impeded.
- If there are overhead walkways, use them as much as possible. This is safer for everyone.



- Leave your dog at home.

During the Sale

- The safest viewing position is always on the tiered seating or standing immediately around the ring.
- Stay right out of the way of the staff. Don't block the exits for the cattle.
- Let the ringman work unhindered and don't

poke at the cattle in the ring.

- The ringman must not enter the weighing box to turn cattle into the ring.
- The ringman must have effective shelter(s) available.
- The ringman should be able to open the exit gate without leaving his shelter.



Allow the Mart staff to do their work without getting in their way

Children in Marts and Lairages

- If children are present they must be constantly supervised. Children present in Marts should largely be confined to the viewing area - or the canteen.
- There is no situation where older children up to and including the term "minors" should be involved with any work activity involving cattle in either Marts or Lairages.

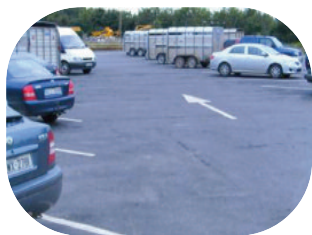
About You – Yourself

The origin of many accidents is in the attitude "It can't happen to me".

- Are you fit and agile enough to handle the cattle?
- How good are you as a 'Stockman'? Do you recognise all of the breeds and signs of stress and arousal?
- Do you understand the Animal Welfare rules?
- How is your personal hygiene? After handling cattle do you always wash your hands before eating or smoking?
- Do you wear waterproof boots and leggings to avoid urine splashes?
- Are you a team player?



Your competence is central to safety



Parking Safely at the Mart/Lairage

- Once unloaded leave the loading/unloading bays clear with sufficient manoeuvring room for other drivers. Don't block the loading zone.
- Park in an orderly manner so that other traffic can get in and out. Follow the instructions of the parking attendants or signs.
- If it is necessary to park on public roads outside of a Mart this should be done safely and generally confined to one side of the road only.



Escaped cattle on a highway - there are serious liability issues - they must be confined to the site

Emergencies: An Escaped or Wild, Highly Fractious Animal

- A trained First Aid person must be available.
- If someone gets hit then immediately secure the situation by controlling it, before First Aid is given. Get help from other staff.
- With an escape immediately raise the alarm. Warn anyone in the vicinity and close the road gates as quickly as possible.



Don't mix mature bulls as a fight is almost inevitable

Summary of the "Do's and Don'ts" at Marts and Lairages

Do's

- DO** back right up to the loading bay so escape is impossible when loading/unloading
- DO** let staff know if you are delivering a bull or a fractious animal
- DO** watch out for cattle being moved – move out of the way
- DO** follow any request from staff
- DO** watch for an escape route
- DO** watch for any escaped / out of control cattle
- DO** use the overhead walkways wherever possible
- DO** park your vehicle in an orderly manner

Don'ts

- DON'T** leave any possible escape gaps when loading/unloading
- DON'T** attempt to help with cattle unless you are asked to
- DON'T** stand talking in the race when staff are moving cattle
- DON'T** bring in children
- DON'T** move livestock without a stick or a "Sorting Paddle"
- DON'T** smoke inside the buildings
- DON'T** bring your dog
- DON'T** poke at the cattle in the sale ring

Further Information

- The Health and Safety Authority's web site www.hsa.ie.
- Contact the Health and Safety Authority at wcu@hsa.ie or LoCall **1890 289 389**.

Acknowledgements: Photographs with permission from Kieran and Magee Ltd, owner of the Ardee Mart, Kilkenny Co-op Mart, Cillin Hill Mart, Kilkenny and the New Zealand Accident Compensation Corporation Ltd for use of diagrams from Bulletin 517, 2002