

Livestock Safety – Facilities and Equipment

Many of the injuries related to the handling of animals are caused by poor facilities and equipment rather than the animals themselves. Handling facilities should be carefully designed not only for efficiency, but also for the safety of both the animals and the handler.

Lighting

Work areas should be well lit to prevent falls. The lighting should be even and diffuse. Bright spots and shadows will make animals skittish. Lighting should be at least ten footcandles in handling areas.

Avoid layouts that would make animals look into the sun, especially in loading areas. Also, moving animals from a dark area to a light area will result in less balking than trying to go from a light to dark area.

Floors

A firm, level walking surface along with proper footwear will help prevent accidents.

Concrete is the best choice for a flooring material. It should have a roughened finish, and high traffic areas, such as alleyways, should be grooved. Sand or limestone should be spread on alleys when wet to provide better footing. Floors in handling

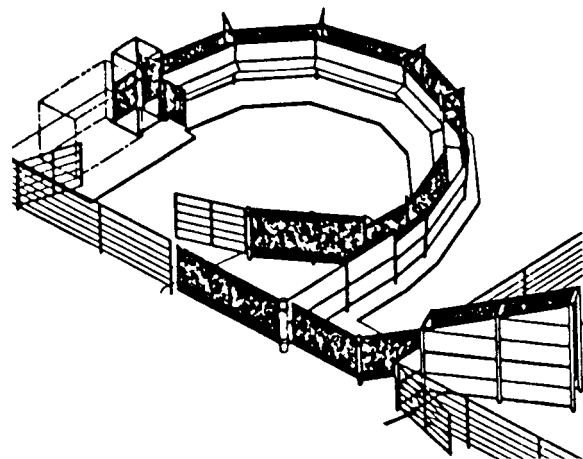
areas should be sloped to provide drainage away from the working area.

Chutes and Alleyways

Both chutes and alleyways should be designed to decrease shadows and therefore decrease excitement among the animals.

Chutes should be wide enough for animals to pass through easily, but not wide enough for them to turn around in.

Using solid-walled chutes instead of open fencing will decrease balking. Wood is



a better choice of materials than metal, because it is much quieter. Curved chutes are more efficient than straight chutes because

they prevent the animal from seeing a squeeze chute until they are almost in it.

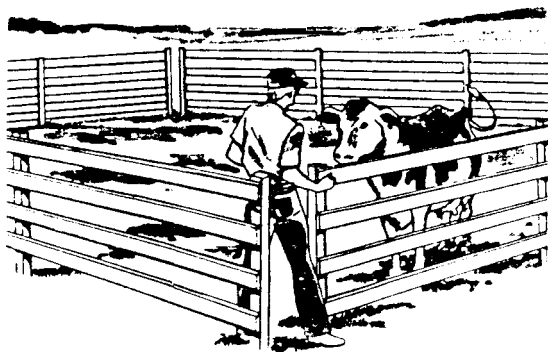
Catwalks should be used along chutes and alleyways to allow the handler to work on the animal without leaning in over the animal or entering the area and becoming injured or trapped. Catwalks greater than eighteen inches above the ground should have a guardrail to prevent falls.

Mangates installed behind squeeze chutes should swing away from the chute to prevent the handler from getting trapped between two animals.

Fencing and Gates

Both fences and gates should be strong and durable enough to be able to withstand crowding. Both should be kept free of sharp projections.

Mangates should always be built into fencing. These small passages between two fenceposts should be about fourteen inches apart to allow a handler to escape from unexpected dangerous situations without having to open a gate or climb a fence.



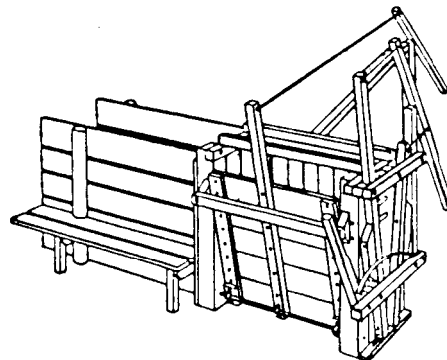
Restraining Equipment

The most important thing to remember when using restraining equipment is to gear

the degree of restraint to the task, using the minimum restraint necessary for protection of the animal and the handler. This will make restraining the animal easier in the future.

Headgates and squeeze chutes should be designed to handle livestock with the least amount of excitement to the animals and the least amount of exposure to the handler. An escape device should always be present to prevent entrapment of the handler.

A rope halter should be used in addition to a squeeze chute and headgate when engaging in major animal handling activities such as hoof trimming and medicating. A tail holder should be used to prevent eye injuries when milking or examining an animal. When milking, or cleaning or examining the udder on cows that are known kickers, use an anti-kicking device or a back-up bar.



Check restraining equipment regularly due to the extreme stress placed on it.

Electrical Equipment

All electrical equipment should be installed and maintained according to the manufacturer's standards, and should be kept in good repair. Before buying, make sure all equipment has been tested and approved by a recognized testing agency. Avoid using homemade fence controllers. Make sure fuse boxes, switches, and electri-

cal outlets in wet areas are moisture proof. Use a ground fault circuit interrupter with water heaters, power tools, and other equipment.

When repairing electrical equipment, make sure automatic switches and remote control devices are cut off from their power source or padlocked in the off position before any repair work is started.

By keeping these simple recommendations in mind when constructing and maintaining your facilities, the risk of accidents in and around your animal handling facilities can be decreased, and many injuries to you and your livestock can be prevented.

REFERENCES

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