

Farm animals on the loose



Loose animals are scared animals and scared animals are dangerous animals. Whether as a result of a livestock truck accident, barn or pasture escape, when farm animals get loose, there is great risk that an animal is going to get hurt or killed, a human is going to get injured and property is going to get damaged. In addition to ensuring public safety, first responders must be increasingly aware of animal care best practices and how their actions will be perceived by the public and shared on social media.

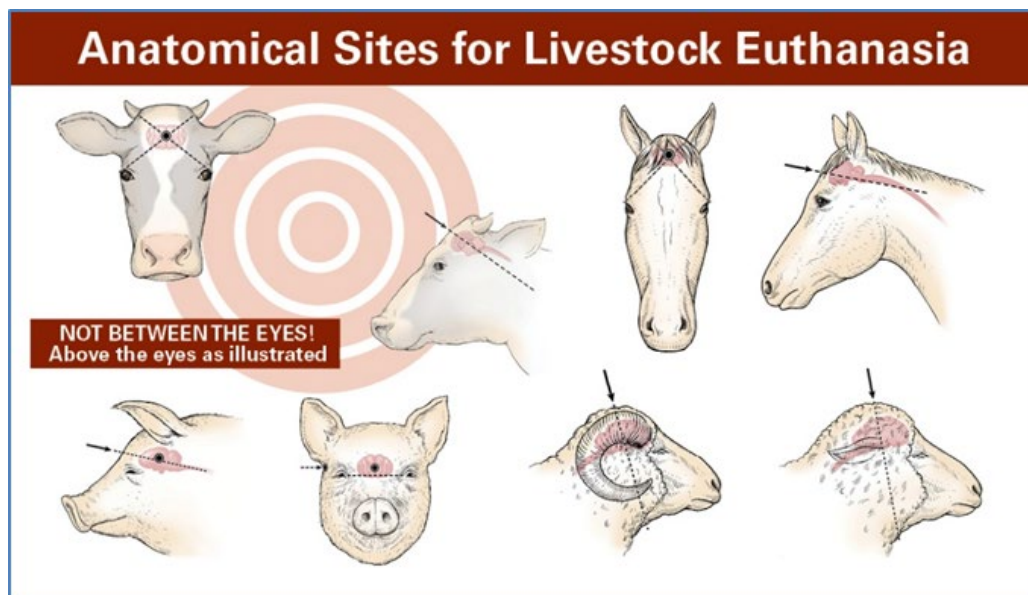


Things you need to know

1. These animals should be considered extremely dangerous. Public safety must always take priority in the situation. If an animal is a threat to the public, it must be euthanized as soon as you can safely do so.
2. Don't escalate the situation, if the incident consists of a few animals standing along a fence line or corral near other animals, they are looking to go back in with their herd mates. Open a gate or find a way for the animals to get back in.
3. Police are in charge of the scene, but they may need to enlist fire departments and professionals from livestock and veterinary sectors with animal handling experience and equipment resources such as penning panels for containment and trailers for transport. Keep a list of local livestock handling resources and contacts on hand.
4. As a containment/transport plan develops, find a safe contained area nearby or paneling to contain the animals. Before approaching the animals, plan containment options such as nearby field or pastures, snow fences for smaller animals; or portable gates from a farm store, sales barn, or fair ground. Your goal is to find materials and areas that are safe for both animals and humans. Keep everyone away from the animal(s) until a plan is established and a containment area can be created or found.
5. Access to a truck or trailer will be required to transport the animal(s) once they are contained. Low slung horse or gooseneck trailers are preferred as they are low to the ground and easier to load animals. Allow the animal(s) time to calm down and then quietly load them into a trailer.



6. Do not chase the animals closely on foot, car, or truck. Never yell or use a horn or sirens. The animal(s) will perceive you as a predator and it will only make the animal more frightened. They are running because they are being chased. Livestock are prey animals and their natural instinct is to flee when frightened. If they become cornered and feel threatened, they will defend themselves if unable to flee.
7. If an animal is standing calmly in one place or grazing, do not approach it until ready to contain it. When approaching livestock, try to avoid approaching them head on or directly from behind- livestock will not be able to see you and may startle. Approach from the side, around the area of their hip, so you are within their line of vision.
8. If you do have to move farm animals, move them in a group very slowly and calmly. Do not enlist the help of untrained bystanders and keep all people (including the media) away from the animals - ideally out of the area completely. If assistance is required, bring in trained handlers from the farming, livestock transport or veterinary sectors.
9. If euthanasia is required, consult with a veterinarian, if possible. Shots aimed for the brain are recommended when euthanasia with a firearm is necessary.



Police are in charge of the scene but they may need to enlist fire departments and industry professionals from livestock and veterinary sectors with animal handling experience and equipment resources such as penning panels for containment and trailers for transport. Several years ago in Alberta, a cattle handler was killed by a cow that had escaped from a veterinary clinic. The incident involved experienced cattle handlers and police. Even the most experienced handlers are no match for a terrified animal.



Cattle



Bulls (mature male cattle) are extremely aggressive and can be very dangerous animals. Consider euthanizing these animals immediately when public safety is at risk. Cattle have extreme reach with their back legs and can strike behind them, off to their side and up by their head. They can also kick out to the side while running.



Horses

Horses can strike with both their back and their front feet. They can also bite. If possible approach a horse on its left side, as horses are traditionally trained to be approached from the left side. When available, use panels for moving horses slowly and quietly.



Pigs

Be careful when handling pigs, as they can bite. Boars (adult males) and sows (adult females) are very large and can be very aggressive. Solid barriers such as a back board or ladders covered with tarps can be used to move or contain pigs.



Poultry (chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese)

Poultry frighten quickly when in close contact with people and will react hysterically. The best containment and herding aid for poultry is snow or construction fencing. Bring in trained catchers when poultry are involved.



Sheep

Do not grab or lift sheep by their wool. Sheep will do anything to stay with their group. Don't isolate individual sheep. Instead, move them as a group.

Five things you need to know about farm animals in an emergency:

1. A dynamic risk assessment is required with each incident as the situation can quickly change. "Slow is Fast" when it comes to working with farm animals.
2. Roaming livestock and vehicular traffic makes for potentially very dangerous situations. Public safety is paramount. Enlist the help of trained animal handlers early in the process to develop a plan for containment and transport.
3. Farm animals do not understand that lights and sirens mean pull over. Instead, emergency lights and loud noises can make them panic.
4. Farm animals view humans as predators and their natural instinct is to flee from predators.
5. Most farm animals prefer their group and become extremely agitated when isolated or separated from other animals. Try to keep them calm and together.



Emergency Contact List

Region: _____

Area: _____ Date Updated: _____

Emergency First Response – 911, OPP – 1-888-310-1122 PAWS -
1-833-926-4625 Poultry Emergency Contacts: 519 897 4584

Resource	Assets	Phone 1	Phone 2
Farm 1			
Farm 2			
Farm 3			
Livestock Fencing (Temporary fencing and panels)			
Gooseneck or low trailers			
Temporary livestock holding facility			
Local commercial livestock transporter			
Veterinary Clinic (large animal)			
Veterinary Clinic (large animal)			
Euthanasia equipment and dead- stock removal			
Tow truck operators (heavy if possible)			
Closest stock yards			