

Livestock safety:

Vaccinations and other shots

Keeping animals safe and healthy is always important, whether you work at a large ranch or a small farm. This guide helps you and your team stay safe while vaccinating livestock (and giving other shots) and provides a handy checklist to help you manage your safety efforts.

General safety

- Check chute system and alleyway and adjust for animal size.
- Restrain animals when giving shots.
- Make sure you have a clear exit route in case the animal gets free.
- Keep workplace free of clutter and tripping hazards.
- Check chute and processing area for wasp and hornet nests.
- Use low-stress animal handling techniques.
- Keep children out of the work area.
- Store syringes, needles, and medicine bottles in a secure location.
- Wash hands and equipment after use.

Communication

Train employees on risks and hazards before they do any task. They should know the product, its purpose, how it is used, its hazards, protective steps, and emergency and first aid procedures.

Include every product in your written hazard communication program (Hazcom). This should be available to employees:

- List of all chemicals, including vaccines and other medicine

- A review of hazards when working with chemicals and shots, and how to address them
- Safety data sheets (SDS) for every chemical and shot
- Necessary personal protective equipment (PPE)

Needle-stick injuries should be reported and treated immediately. Look at the label and SDS for first aid and exposure steps.

Sharps safety

Put a sharps management system in place to protect people and livestock from unprotected needles.

- Store needles, syringes, and shots in a secure location.
- Wear lightweight gloves when using sharps.
- Put cap on syringe when not using it.
- Never carry loaded syringes in your coat or pockets.

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Data sheets

To find safety data sheets for your chemicals, go online and search for the product name, and then select the one from your manufacturer. You can also request these directly from your vendor.



- Dispose of needles properly:
 - Put used needles in sharps disposal containers.
 - Place sharps containers where needles are commonly used—near chute system, near calving pens, in ranch trucks, in medicine room, etc.
 - Dispose of sharps containers properly.
 - Partner with your local vet clinic or medical clinics. Or, use this website to find a drop spot near you: <https://safeneedledisposal.org/search-results/>
- Rotate jobs throughout the day when possible.
- Use good form when giving a shot from the ground:
 - Bend your knees, but not past 90 degrees.
 - Don't round your back; stay in alignment and maintain your natural back curve. Keep your chin up and your shoulders back.
 - Maintain a stable position. Put one foot slightly in front of the other with your knees slightly bent and your legs shoulder-width apart. This helps maintain balance and improve strength.

First aid

Needle sticks can cause injury or illness; left untreated, they can lead to infection, or cause dangerous side effects if the medicine is injected.

- Report any needle stick wounds immediately and monitor for issues.
- Refer to label and safety data sheet for first aid and exposure steps.
- Keep a first aid kit with ice packs.
- If you see signs of illness, take the employee to the hospital immediately.
- Record and review all self-injection accidents and incidents to prevent them in the future.

Ergonomics

Good body mechanics and a good work setup can help reduce muscle fatigue and prevent strains and sprains, no matter how many animals you are giving shots to.

- Warm up before starting work. Wrists and hands can be fatigued after a day of branding or working cows. Use these exercises to warm up and prevent injuries: saif.com/ergo

High-hazard tasks

Giving certain types of shots poses a significant hazard to humans. Identify high-hazard products in your livestock management plan. Always review safety data sheets and contact your veterinarian to be sure. Work with your veterinarian to find the best products, and explore safer options.

For example, hormones can cause severe health effects if accidental self-injection occurs. Use effective restraint systems, safety gloves, and safe needle handling, and avoid working alone.