

Branding safety

Branding days can be long, hard, and dusty. But they can also be a highlight of the year that brings family, friends, and employees together. Review these tips with employees and volunteers before starting work to improve safety for everyone.

An employee was walking through a pen of calves, evaluating them. When a calf kicked him in the knee, it fractured his knee cap. How can we prevent something like this from happening?

When moving cows from one corral to the other, an employee started running after several escaping cows. She slipped on cow manure, spraining her knee and wrist. What can we do to improve the way we handle this common issue?

A cowboy was opening gates to move cattle between pens when his horse reared up and fell on him. His foot got caught in the stirrup and he suffered a broken pelvis, taking months to recover. What are we going to do to make sure our horses are ready for the job today?

Key take-aways

- Scan your environment for tripping hazards or other obstacles and remove them.
- Train volunteers and employees on safely operating the chute system and calf table.
- Review workflow, including the location of the branding iron/fire, medicine and records, and roping area. Discuss the flow of traffic for cattle and crews.
- Assign roles and responsibilities and set clear expectations.
- Discuss who will be working horseback and expectations for cowboys and their horses.
- Discuss vaccinations and product specific safety information.
- Locate the SHARPs disposal container, first-aid kit, hand washing materials, gloves, and other safety equipment.
- Don't assume "common sense." Every cattle operation does things differently. Communicate as a team often and set clear expectations.

Take action

Discuss the following questions as a group and walk around the work area before beginning the day's work.

- What is the goal of the day? What are everyone's roles? Discuss expectations with spectators. Where should they stand or sit if they aren't assigned a role?
- Do a walkthrough of the area to check for issues like weak fences, gates shut improperly, tripping hazards, etc.

More info

Use our [branding safety checklist](#) resource to help with your discussion.

For more safety and health resources for agriculture go to saif.com/agsafety.

