

Branding safety checklist

More info

Visit saif's agriculture safety topic page (saif.com/agsafety) for additional checklists and resources to help keep your operation safe.

Branding safety

Regardless of how your operation handles animal branding, preparing beforehand can ensure everything goes smoothly and everyone stays safe. Here's a checklist to help:

Work environment

- Prevent trips and falls by removing sticks, cords, large rocks, and other debris
- Secure your chute systems: ensure they are level, in good repair, and pinch points are covered
- Check condition of calf table
- Outline work flow, including where animals will go before and after, and identify escape routes for workers
- Set up a space for your records, medicine, branding iron, and fuel source. The area should be separated from animals and children

- Using ropes and horses for branding?
 - Provide space for the horses and ropers to work without getting tangled up with other people or equipment
 - Plan where your teams will work and ensure easy paths for moving on foot
 - Identify the lead roper who will assign jobs and step in to handle difficult situations

Shot safety

- Review all labels and safety data sheets for products being administered
- Check all syringes and needles and replace any that are broken or damaged
- Have a container, such as a SHARPs container, available for disposal of any damaged or used needles
- Provide lightweight gloves

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Safety materials

Make sure that you have the following on hand:

- Hand washing materials
- Eye wash (ensure that it is clean and has not expired)
- First-aid kit, including burn treatment materials
- Gloves—lightweight or leather depending on the task
- A sharp knife and pliers
- Drinking water
- Shade tent or other means to get out of the sun

Employee/volunteer management

Brandings are often the highlight of the spring and may attract volunteers and new or temporary employees. Volunteers should be treated as employees and should receive clear expectations and training. Never assume that someone knows what to do even if they come with experience. Instead, be sure to instruct and demonstrate anything that you expect them to know or understand. Each ranch and region does things a little bit differently, so we can never rely on “common sense.”

- Establish a chain of command
- Determine everyone’s roles ahead of time. If everyone knows their roles it will decrease confusion, congestion, and stress on animals
- Determine the cow dogs and horses that are up to the task—don’t let volunteers bring horses or dogs that will add stress to the operation

- Prepare a day-of task briefing before beginning work. Here are things to review with your crews:
 - Schedule for the day: start, lunch, and finish times
 - Individual roles and responsibilities
 - Task specific expectations
 - Vaccination safety, including what is being administered, to who, and product specific safety information
 - PPE and first-aid kit
 - Low stress animal handling principles
 - Expectations for overall conduct and behavior
- Use our branding safety (saif.com/S1116) resource to lead the discussion

Animals respond to stress. The less stressful the process can be, the better for the animals and the workers. Plan ahead to have a smooth and successful day.