



NEVER TRUST A BULL

Familiarity with individual cattle can lead to complacency, especially when handling bulls. A number of accidents, some fatal, happen every year because farmers fail to treat their bulls with respect. A familiar comment from individuals injured by a bull has been their astonishment at the speed and agility of the bull during the attack.

Remember, a playful bull can kill you just as easily as an angry one.

HOW SHOULD YOU HANDLE THE BULL?

From an early age the bull should learn to associate the presence of people with pleasant things, such as feeding, grooming and exercise.

Never stoke or scratch a bull's forehead as this may encourage butting.

If you buy a bull, find out how he was handled and the kind of equipment used, and take time to get to know him-remembering to be especially cautious at this stage as the change of surroundings can temporarily excite or unsettle any animal.

All bulls should be ringed at 10 months old, and the ring inspected regularly for wear or damage. Never ring your own bull, get the vet to do it for you.

Routine treatment should be firm but fair and handlers must be physically fit as well as having suitable training and experience with animals generally.

HOW SHOULD YOU HOUSE THE BULL?

The housing structure should:

- be sited where the bull will be in touch with normal farmyard activities, including other stock movements, both by sight and smell.
- be large enough and strong enough to contain the animal.
- allow the bull to be fed and watered from outside the pen.
- allow the bull to be cleaned out or bedded without the need to expose yourself to the hazard of direct physical contact. (In effect this means that a gate or wall is in place between the bull and yourself at all times).
- have outer walls and fences at least 1.5 metres high.
- have fences, walls and gates designed not to allow young children to pass through or over into the bullpen.
- have safety signs warning of the presence of a bull at the entrance to any building where the bull is kept. Use a triangular sign with a bull's head in black on a yellow background with a black border. (These can be purchased at an agricultural retail outlet).

NEVER ENTER THE ENCLOSURE WHEN THE BULL IS LOOSE

HOW SHOULD BULLS BE KEPT IN OPEN FIELDS?

When grazing a bull with the herd, you should make maximum use of fields to which the public do not have right of access. Avoid grazing a bull in a field if it is crossed by a right of way.

Public roads should be avoided as a route to walk stock bulls, even within a herd under close control. This is particularly true for extreme dairy breeds, which tend to be the most dangerous.

If you have to enter the field to check the stock make sure you have an escape route planned in advance. It is always advisable to enter the field in a suitable vehicle (tractor or 4 wheel drive vehicle), which can act as a refuge in the event of an unexpected attack.

When threatened a bull may show a “threat display.” The threat display often begins with a broadside view with back arched to show the greatest profile, followed by the head down, sometimes shaking the head rapidly from side to side, protrusion of the eyeballs, and hair standing up along the back. If this happens the person should back slowly away from the bull. NEVER RUN away and do not turn your back on him.

It is essential that all farmers and farm workers treat bulls with the utmost respect if they are to avoid being attacked. Never trust any bull irrespective of age or breed.

REMEMBER: STAY SAFE ON THE FARM

For further information on farming health and safety issues in Northern Ireland please contact the HSENI helpline on 0800 0320 121 or visit the new Stay Farm Safe Website at www.hseni.gov.uk/farmsafe which gives information on the different areas of farming you may be involved in and sensible, practical advice on how to carry out tasks in a safe manner.