

AgriKids Farm Safety Ambassador



Theme 3: Animal Safety & Wellbeing

Level: 1st – 2nd Class

Objective

The children will learn how to recognise the different signs and physical behaviours used by animals when they are feeling aggressive, agitated, content or upset.

Learning outcome topics

1. What the animals are saying. Knowing the behavioural traits of animals when threatening or passive. Cattle | Horses | Dogs | Cats
2. Animal care and wellbeing
3. Zoonotic diseases.

Children will also learn about why farmers keep certain animals on their farms

Tip: You can use the Farm Safety Workbook in conjunction with this discussion.

Topics

1. What are the farm animals saying

Ask the children to name animals typical to a farm. Write the answers down on the board and put a line under the following ones: Bull / Horse / Dog / Cat / Cow

We are going to discuss these animals in greater detail!

The Bull

Bulls are territorial animals. This means they guard the area they consider belongs to them, eg. their field or pen. You should never enter a field with a bull. At about 10 months old a bull will have a ring fitted in their nose so they can be led & handled using a rope or chain.

Bulls and cows will show signs when planning to attack or 'charge'.

- They will stop grazing & watch you (stare you down)
- Bellow – make a grunting sound
- Start pawing the ground with their hoof
- Shake their head from side to side

Of course some farmers will have to enter an area with a bull, but they make sure to follow the following safety measures:

- Have an escape route
- Never turn their back
- Enter with a suitable farm vehicle, eg. Jeep
- Ensure there is a sign on the gate warning people that there is a bull in the field.
- Farmers always make sure that their bull associates them with nice things, such as feeding, grooming and gentle treatment. Which is why they should never put a ring in a bull's nose themselves.

Question:

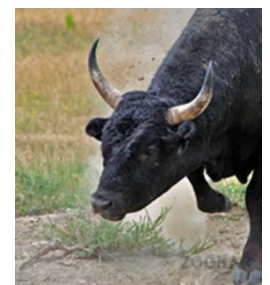
Does a farmer put a ring in their own bull's nose?

Answer:

No they do not!. Putting a ring in can hurt the bull so a professional, eg. A vet, is asked to do the job. If a farmer hurts their bull, the bull will remember and will not trust the farmer and if they don't trust the farmer – then they could attack the farmer!

Did you know...

Bulls are colour-blind! It's perfectly ok to wear red around a bull. What angers them is movement or flapping.



The Cow

Many children will undoubtedly mention cows on the list. Do they know what cows give us? As we get milk from cows we also have cream, yoghurts, ice-cream and butter. So why not ask the class to give a round of applause to say thank you to cows for all the yummy food we get.

Did you know...

*A bull is **not** statistically the most dangerous animal on a farm! **Cows** protecting their young calves cause more accidents!*

But, it's important to let them know that cows are considered the most dangerous of the farm animals. Why? They are protecting their young or new born calves and therefore cause more livestock accidents than bulls. Farmers have to be extremely careful when working with freshly calved cows, they are very protective mummies.



The Horse

A. The Signs:

A great way to learn how a horse feels is by look at their ears. Ask the class to put their hands on either side of their heads as if they were 'horses' ears & ask them to mimic the following actions.



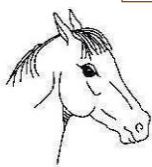
'Sleepy Horse'

Ears out to the side show the horse is relaxed, sleepy but in some cases unwell. Normally the hind leg will be resting and the eyelids will be droopy



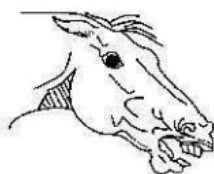
'Happy Horse'

Ears pricked forward and alert



'Cross or Scared Horse'

Ears flattened back is a warning sign. The horse is feeling aggressive or scared and you may be in danger of being bitten or kicked.



'Listening Horse'

Ears pivot and twist from side to side. The horse has been alerted to something



B. Blind spots and Hand feeding:

Blind spots:

A horse has two blind spots! Directly in front and directly behind them. A horse cannot see the ground near their front feet, and they cannot see their knees and chest.

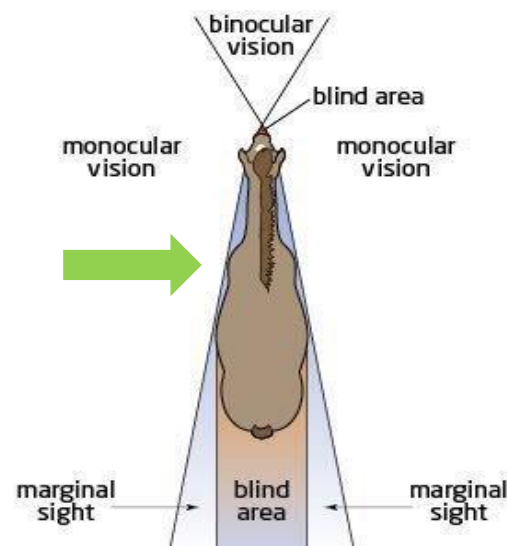
Never stand directly behind a horse or approach them from the front as you are at risk of startling them and getting yourself hurt.



Did you know...

A horse can sleep standing up!

Pic: PetMD

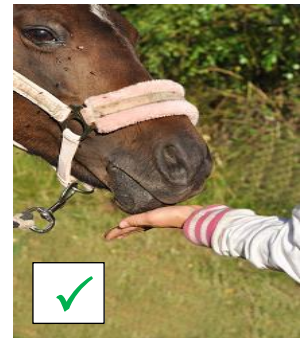
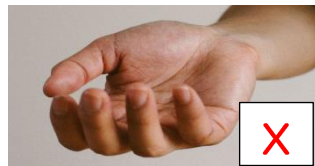


*Always approach the horse at their shoulder area.
(Green arrow)*

2. Hand feeding:

When hand feeding a horse there are some simple rules to always follow:

- Keep your hand below their muzzle
- They will bring their head to your hand
- They may sniff at the food before they take it
- Never curl your hand so your fingers are facing upwards, if you do so you are at risk of getting bitten.



Dogs and Cats

Many farms will have dogs and cats who also do important work as well as being household pets.

1. Ask the children to name some jobs a dog or cat might do around a farm, here are the most common ones: eg. Herding sheep, hunting rodents, etc.
2. Ask the children what signs a dog or cat might display to show a good mood or bad mood!

Dog		Cat	
Good	Bad	Good	Bad
			
Fast wagging tail	Growling	Purring	Hissing
Bringing you a toy	Showing teeth	Rubbing off your legs	Striking their paw
Ears up	Tail tucked in	Gentle meowing	Arched back
Relaxed eyes	Snapping	'Kneading' their paws	Ears lying flat
Relaxed body	Ears tucked back	Tail up high	Tail flicking back and forth

Remember

Never to touch a dog or cat if you don't know its name or if you haven't asked the owner first.

With all animals – it's very important to wash your hands after touching any animal – see our Zoonoses section or more.

2. Taking care of our animals

Ask the children what their parents / guardians do to take care of them.

You might hear answers such as:

- Feeding me;
- Keeping us warm;
- living in a house;
- a warm bed;
- minding us when we are sick.

If these are mentioned then you can say this is how farmers take care of their animals.

- Home – the shed should be well ventilate airy with a warm bedding (straw or shavings)
- Medicine - the farmer will treat the animals with different medicines to keep them healthy but when the animals are very sick or need to be tested the farmer will call a vet.
- Food – quality food that is not musty or stale is given to our animals. Many farmers grow and produce their own fodder (silage or haylage) to feed their animals. This is mowed grass that is baled and stored for the winter months.



Handling animals

Farmers should use proper handling facilities when working with their animals, that way everyone stays safe. When they are touching, leading or handling their animals they are very careful not to harm them.

Ask the children how they would hold a baby chick. Remind them that the chick's little bones are very delicate so they must be very careful when handling them.

An easy way to demonstrate is to hold an egg as if it were a baby chick, cup it in your hand so that it doesn't roll off and gently enough so it doesn't crack.

Remind the children never to approach an animal they don't know or without the owner's permission. Always ask the farmer before approaching an animal and if approaching young or young animals, only if it safe to do so, we don't want to make the mums angry!



Handling dogs and cats

Use a stuffed toy to show and discuss the best way to pet a dog or cat.

One hand is enough, two is too ruff!

Only pet your dog or cat along their back or at their chest, using one hand. Some younger children tend to grab the dog / or cat's nose which is how they breath and may cause them to snap.



Paws for 3!

If you want to be sure a dog or cat wants a pet, rub them gently on their back and take your hand away.

Count to 3. If they come back to you they want another pet but if they walk away it's best to leave them be.



Nom Nom time!

We always leave our dogs and cats alone when eating. When they were born they probably had many brothers and sisters and there was always a lot of competition to get fed - so many animals are very protective over their food and can get aggressive if they think their food might be taken from them.



3. Zoonosis

Zoonotic diseases are infections passed from animals to people. To prevent sickness, it is very important that you always wash your hands after visiting a farm and after touching or petting animals.

20 seconds is all it takes to get your hands really clean. Warm soapy water is best. To make sure you wash your hands properly follow this handy reminder.....



Farmers and vets are always careful to wash their hands after working with animals.



Why not learn our handy poem below!

Get some water, not too hot
Add the soap, quite a lot
Now clean on top and in between
Twist those hands, they're NEARLY clean
Clean each thumb, one by one
Finger-tip twists, we're nearly done
Rinse them off and dry up too
They're clean, we're done good for you!



Follow up activities & projects

- Complete the activities in the workbook
- Try the Lesson Plan for this Theme.
- Download and fill in our 'Spot the Dangers' worksheets.
- Sign up for an AgriKids webinar
- Invite a vet, nurse or farm representative such as IFA or Teagasc to show the children more about animal care and safety
- Visit a local petting farm to meet some real farm animals
- Create a wall mural of all our favourite farm animals
- If you have a model farm in class add in some animals and put some people in charge of minding them each week.
- Create wall art of all your favourite farm animals
- Find out more on zoonoses at www.hsa.ie