

AgriKids Farm Safety Ambassador



Theme 3: Animal Safety & Wellbeing

Level: 3rd – 4th 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. About how some signs are instinctive and some are learned.

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. Animal Handling
4. Zoonotic diseases.

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

Topics

1. List the farm animals and learn their language.

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 very 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'. These are instinctive behaviours, it is what comes naturally to them:

- 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!

Question:

Are bull's threatened by the colour red?

Answer:

The answer is NO. Bulls are colour blind. They can only see shades such as greys / whites and blacks and pale shades of yellow and blue. They cannot see red and green. What bulls do not like are things waving, flapping or moving, this threatens them and can trigger an attack. Also wearing hi vis around livestock not accustomed to handling can also trigger an attack due to the reflectors.



Learned Behaviour



Instinctive behaviours

Learned behaviours:

Learned behaviours develop from experience and repetition:

- Coming to the gate at certain times (think of cows at milking time)
- Leading with rope and chain (bulls)
- Drinking milk from a bucket (calf)

Instinctive behaviour is what comes naturally. It can be unpredictable behaviour which is why we never take risks with animals.



Instinctive behaviours

The Cow

Many children will undoubtedly mention cows on the list. Do they know what cow's give us? As we get milk from cows we also have cream, yoghurts, ice-cream and butter.

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 so using calving gates will protect the farmer.



Stay Safe
Create a good physical barrier
when tagging



The Horse

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.



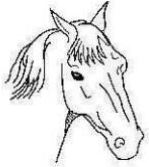
'Happy Horse'

Ears pricked forward and alert



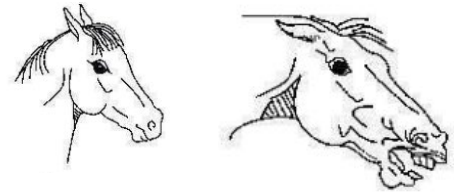
'Sleepy Horse'

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



'Listening Horse'

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



'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.

Blind spots and Hand feeding:

Blind spots:

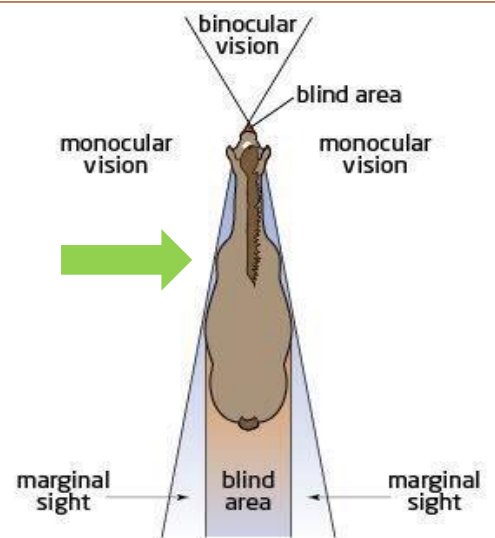
A horse has two blind spots! Directly in front and directly behind them. A horse cannot see the ground near their front feet, and they cannot see their knees and chest.

Never stand directly behind a horse or approach them from the front as you are at risk of startling them and getting yourself hurt. Always approach the horse at their shoulder area. **(Green arrow)**

Hand feeding:

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

- Keep your hand below their muzzle
- Be patient, they will bring their head to your hand
- Allow them to 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.



Signs of affection

Your horse or pony have many ways to show affection or to show they trust you. Horses can show their affection through grooming, nuzzling, rubbing, resting their heads on you, and even licking.

A horse or pony that follows you can be a sign of trust, they recognise you as a leader and someone who takes care of them. However some horses do get a little bit pushy and may be following you looking for treats. Make sure you can see the difference and that your horse or pony respects you while following you.

Dogs and Cats

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

- 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.
- Ask the children the 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.

2. Animal care and wellbeing

Good animal care on a farm is shown many ways. Such as when the farmer will de-horn the bull at a young age, these horns can grow very big and become dangerous for other animals and humans.

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!

Whether we have a pet dog, hamster or a herd of cows, it is hugely important that our animals and pets only associate us with things that are positive.

Below are the three key areas we must address when considering the wellbeing of our animals.

a) Housing

Where we keep our animals impacts how they feel. Whether it's a rabbit hutch or slatted shed, our animals must be comfortable, warm with access to good bedding (if being kept indoors) and ventilation.

Their home or living environment should not cause them stress or harm in terms of their health and wellness.



b) Nutrition

Good quality food is vital for all animals. Hay that is not musty or dusty prevents respiratory conditions in animals such as horses and cattle. Not having access to good food and can cause an animal to suffer illness and disease, dehydration and hunger.

c) Health

Veterinarians are key partners to farmers. They are experts in all areas of animal health and emergency care.

Dealing with situations which the farmer is not trained for eg. testing cattle for diseases such as TB, dealing with a horse with chronic colic (stomach pain) or an animal who is having difficulty giving birth.

A vet's timely intervention can be the difference between life and death of an animal. It's vital that farmers understand when to call in the vet to an animal's medical situation.

**3. Animal handling**

New-born chicks and ducklings are fragile creatures and we should be very careful when holding them as we don't want to injure or frighten them. When picking up such fragile animals, such as chicks, place one hand under its tummy and place the other hand on top of it and hold it gently but firmly. Being careful not to squeeze them too hard or choke them. They are not definitely not strong enough to survive a fall so extra care must be taken not to drop them. Birds in general have hollow bones which are much lighter than regular bones, but this is what helps birds to fly. and help birds to fly. But being lighter they are also very fragile, meaning they can break easily.



New-born lambs and piglets are also fragile and should only be handled by the experienced livestock farmer. Their mothers will be stressed and agitated and feeling extremely protected of their new arrivals.

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.



Handling of larger animals - Horses and Cattle

When leading horses and ponies do so by a head collar and lead rope. When being turned out into a field, the animal must be led a distance into the field. The handler should then turn the horse to face the gate, remove head collar & rope and walk back towards the gate.

This technique means you are giving yourself enough time to keep out of the kick zone in the event the horse kicks back as they are excited to be let out. With cattle it is important that an escape route or refuge area is worked out in advance.

Farmers must be aware of the following:

- Know and understand the basics of cattle behaviour.
- Make sure persons handling cattle are capable and knowledgeable
- Use bulls that produce docile offspring.
- Use calving gates when working with cows and new born calves, as they are more likely to attack. (pictured)
- Keep cattle calm when handling them.
- De-bud (de horn) calves early to prevent horn growth.
- Wear suitable protective clothing and footwear.
- Use well designed facilities (an investment in your safety).
- Regularly check and maintain facilities such as the crush, gate latches and fences.
- Keep ground surfaces clean and clear of trip hazards, as far as possible.



Remember: to always be calm and quiet around farm animals. They are not pets and some may not be as accustomed to human interaction as others.

4. Zoonoses: (visit HSA.ie for more)

Zoonotic diseases (also known as zoonoses) are caused by germs that spread between animals and people.

With all animals – it's very important to wash your hands after touching or petting them.

This is to prevent the spread of zoonotic diseases.

Be sure to wash your hands every time you visit a farm, that also includes petting farms!

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.

Diseases	Common Causes
Ringworm	Cattle & Horses
Orf	Sheep & Goats
Lyme Disease	Ticks
Cryptosporidium	Newborn animals
Brucellosis	Cattle
Toxoplasmosis.	Cats
Weils Disease	Rodents



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!



Activities:

- 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
- Invite or visit your local animal sanctuary or rescue to learn more about animal welfare.
- 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
- Watch our horse and pony safety videos with Conrad Sweeney
- Find out more on zoonoses at www.hsa.ie