Toolbox Talks

Animal Handling: Sheep

Toolbox Talks are intended to facilitate health and safety discussions.
Find more Toolbox Talks on the Occupational Safety web page.

Discussion Date:

_____

Supervisor:

_____

Participants:

_____

General Information

The majority of injuries on a sheep farm occur during human/animal interactions. It is important to pay close attention to the potential dangers of working with sheep, and always use correct animal handling techniques. Attention to these dangers is key to personal and animal safety. When handling sheep, remember to:

Preventive measures

- Know the characteristics of sheep
  - Do not like to be moved individually
  - Should be driven from behind
  - When moving; should not be rushed, as this can cause stress.
  - Are quick on their feet and strong for their size.
  - Flight zone – how close you can get to a sheep before they start moving.
    - This zone is bigger for animals that haven't been handled or in contact with people.
    - The closer you get the faster they move.
  - Balance lines – if you move through the lines, the sheep will move the other way.
    - If you're alongside the animal and move forward, it will move backward.
    - If you move back, sheep will move forward.
    - If you're in front and move to the left, sheep will move to your right.
- Calmly handle to prevent the animal from becoming stressed or causing injury to itself, other animals or the handler.
- Have an escape route, if it becomes necessary to get out quickly.

Safety tips when working with sheep

- Do not turn your back on a buck.
- Do not expose the animals to loud noises or quick movements.
- Avoid cluttered alleyways and walking surfaces.