



Accident Prevention

Accidents involving farm animals can be reduced through awareness and education.

The results of a 2007 study of commercial accidents involving farm animals showed that:

- The majority of accidents appeared to be caused by driver fatigue;
- 59% of accidents occur between midnight and 9:00 a.m.;
- 84% of the trailers rolled to the right hand side;
- 80% were single vehicle accidents;
- 85% were caused by driver error;
- Only 1% of reported accidents indicated weather as the cause;
- Of accidents documented, 56 percent involved cattle; 27 percent involved hogs; 11 percent involved poultry.*

*Source: Commercial Livestock Truck Accidents, Woods 2007

Due to weather conditions, plant scheduling, driver shortages and relocation distances, it is often necessary for farm animals to be moved during the late evening and early morning hours. Transporters who carry farm animals are one of the only transporters that load and unload their freight, making their job very physical.

Accident reports have shown that though there are fewer drivers on the road between midnight and 6:00 a.m., drivers are more likely to have accidents during this time period. A study in Australia showed that fatigue is more of a problem on country roads, than on roads in towns or cities. Other accidents causes include driver distractions, speed/poor driving habits and inadequate vehicle maintenance. Fatigue management is the responsibility of both the driver and the company. In order to manage fatigue, you must first understand it.

Fatigue is defined as the loss of alertness (slower reflexes), drowsiness (feeling sleepy), falling asleep, poor memory and irritability (more reactive). It is caused by conflict of the body clock, poor sleep patterns, long work hours and poor health factors. Research shows that night drivers get around two less hours of sleep a day than day drivers do.



Preventing Fatigue

- 1 Ensure you get enough sleep every day. Seven and half hours is commonly recognized as the normal amount of required sleep. If you have a short night's sleep, make up for it the next night by trying to sleep a little longer. Work with management to provide a schedule that allows for a proper amount of sleep. The only cure for fatigue is sleep.
- 2 Create a good sleep environment at home. Keep the rooms cool, turn the phone off, wear earplugs and block out daylight with dark shades or a sleep mask.
- 3 Take naps when able to do so. Power naps lasting between 15 and 40 minutes can be beneficial on the days when you are unable to get the recommended seven and half hours of sleep. They do not make up for a good night's sleep though.
- 4 Stick to regular sleep and wake periods - even on your days off.
- 5 Eat a balanced diet and have regular meal times. Drink plenty of water and exercise. Regular medical check-ups are important.
- 6 If you feel you are too drowsy to drive, pull over and contact your dispatcher to inform them of your situation.
- 7 Take frequent breaks, approximately every two hours, to stop and stretch. This is a good time to do a quick check of the animals on board. This only has to last about five minutes.
- 8 Do not take over the counter stimulants to ease drowsiness. Avoid high energy drinks also as they can affect your ability to focus and are found to have other health implications when consumed frequently.
- 9 Keep the cab of your truck comfortable, but not too warm. Heat will make you tired. Allow fresh air into the cab and turn on the radio or play music.

Learn to recognize the signs of fatigue. The following are signs of fatigue:

- a. You cannot keep your head up.
- b. Your eyes won't stay open or go out of focus.
- c. You drift over the center line or the shoulder line.
- d. Your thoughts wander.
- e. You miss a road sign, exit or a gear.
- f. You don't remember passing certain landmarks or towns.
- g. You see things that are not there.
- h. Your reflexes begin to slow.



Speed and careless driving

- 1 Speed must be monitored at all times. Do not exceed the posted speed limits. Adjust speed for current road, weather and traffic conditions. Use caution when using cruise control.
- 2 Do not tailgate, pass illegally or attempt to beat traffic lights and railroad crossings. Always keep a safe distance.
- 3 A driver must always be aware of the hazards of driving on rural roads as they are often narrow, with soft shoulders that could give way under the weight of large trucks. Do not allow the truck or trailer to get too close to the edge of the ditch while driving down the road or turning in or out of driveways.



Don't drive distracted

The driver must be alert at all times to his driving and those driving around him. Distracted driving laws have been implemented across Canada, yet we continue to see accidents that are at times fatal and are caused by drivers that are distracted. Distractions must be avoided at all times including, but not limited to:

- Texting
- Eating
- Drinking
- Talking on the phone
- Reaching for items on the floor or across the seat

Keep safe by:

- Keeping your phone out of reach so you won't be tempted to use it;
- Using Bluetooth technology if you have to talk on the phone;
- Taking a break to eat;
- Pulling over if you need something off the floor or across the cab.



Vehicle Maintenance

- 1 Drivers must always perform a pre-trip inspection of the tractor and the trailer.
- 2 Repair any mechanical or structural issues, before beginning the trip.
- 3 If the vehicle has just returned from repair, ensure all repairs were performed.
- 4 Be diligent about performing routine maintenance on both the tractor and the trailer.



The Animal Factor

- 1 Load the trailer so the weight is equally distributed throughout the trailer, preventing the trailer from becoming top heavy.
- 2 If you have a split load and drop off part of the load at one stop, make sure you move the remaining animals to redistribute the weight properly.
- 3 Close the compartment gates when necessary to keep animals stationary within the trailer.
- 4 To help prevent load shifting, do not take corners too fast.
- 5 The center of gravity for a trailer holding farm animals is different than other freight hauled commercially. Different trailer designs will also have different centres of gravity (i.e. pot belly trailer versus a straight trailer). The centre of gravity will change in relation to the type of animal transported.
- 6 A study conducted by Ruhl Forensics and Wilson Trailers about trailer rollovers showed that commercial trailers loaded with cattle rarely exceeds five degrees before reaching the point of imminent rollover.



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