

What to do in a motor vehicle accident involving farm animals

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

There are many risks involved when transporting farm animals. Drivers must be aware of the risks and must have a plan in place to deal with them. By being prepared, the driver will be able to respond in an effective manner.

One of the risks is being involved in a motor vehicle accident. Accidents are extremely dangerous and stressful for drivers, first responders and the animals. Economic losses can also be greatly reduced when all involved are prepared for an accident and are able to respond in an efficient and effective manner.



Driver Responsibility

In the event of an emergency, drivers have a responsibility towards the animals, their company and the industry. These responsibilities include:

- 1 Being aware and prepared to handle emergencies;
- 2 Ensuring their own personal safety and an awareness of public safety;
- 3 Responding to the situation professionally;
- 4 Focusing on the welfare and humane treatment of the animals;
- 5 Protecting company property (i.e. the animals, equipment);
- 6 Projecting a positive perception of their company and the industry.



Accident statistics

- 59% of accidents occur between midnight and 9:00 a.m.;
- 56% of all accidents documented involved cattle; 27% involved hogs; 11% involved poultry;
- 84% of the trailers rolled on the right hand side;
- 80% were single vehicle accidents;
- 85% were caused by driver error;
- 1% of reported accidents indicated weather as the cause.



Plan ahead

In order to be properly prepared for an accident, each tractor/trailer unit should contain the following:

- 1** Emergency contact sheet. This list should contain 24 hour phone numbers for:
 - Police/Fire
 - Company Dispatch
 - 24 Hour Accident/Emergency Line (if available)
 - Processing plant
 - Common destinations
 - Insurance companies
- 2** Emergency warning devices (i.e. flares, emergency triangles).
- 3** A disposable camera and accident information sheet.
- 4** Company accident policy sheet (if you have one).
- 5** Fire extinguisher and first aid kit.
- 6** Spill kit.



In the event of an accident

If the driver is not injured and able to do so the following steps should be:

- 1 Call 911 if the accident occurs on a public roadway or if emergency assistance is required for an on-farm accident. Advise operator of:
 - a) The location of the accident;
 - b) Whether you have animals on-board;
 - c) The status of any loose animals;
 - d) Any known hazards.
- 2 Set out emergency warning devices within 10 minutes of accident.
- 3 Phone your dispatcher. If your company has a dispatch checklist for accidents, proceed through list.

If you do not, inform your dispatch of:

 - a) The location of the accident;
 - b) Whether there are any injuries;
 - c) The condition of animals;
 - d) The position of trailer;
 - e) The number of vehicles involved;
 - f) Whether first responders are on scene yet.
- 4 If you do not have a dispatcher, phone the insurance companies for both the cargo and the vehicle, and provide them with the same information.
- 5 If damage is minor, the trailer is upright and there are no injuries, take photos and record names and addresses of other people involved and witnesses. If the trailer is damaged and unable to move, proceed to point six.
- 6 Herd any loose farm animals from the road and gather them in an area as far away from traffic as possible.
- 7 Locate accident reporting kit and camera. Take photos of the accident as soon as possible and if safe to do so.

Photographs should include photos of:

- Road conditions
- Vehicle damage
- Trailer position
- The overall accident scene
- Skid marks
- Curves and intersections in the road
- Where the vehicle left the road



- 8 Take all necessary precautions to provide as much protection and comfort for the animals as possible.
- 9 Release statements only to people of authority. Remember, at this point you are the most visible representative of your company and the agricultural industry and you must conduct yourself as such. **DO NOT SPEAK WITH THE PRESS.** If approached, explain you are focused on the care of the animals at this time and direct them to police or fire.
- 10 When first responders arrive, advise them of the accident including any human injuries, the status of any loose animals, any known hazards and the company's emergency response plan. If you have a company rescue trailer and emergency plan, let the police know the trailer and staff are on the way and estimated time of arrival.
- 11 Respect the chain of command at all times. Once police and fire arrive, they will take command of the incident scene. In Canada, the driver, owner and farmer do not have any legal jurisdiction at an accident scene. They will often be utilized to assist at accidents, but operate solely under the command of police and fire.
- 12 Under no circumstances let any farm animals off the trailer until a containment vehicle or suitable containment area is available.



For more information:
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