

NEW VIDEO PROMOTES SAFETY AT CALVING

Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) has produced a short video to promote the importance of safety when working with cattle at calving, including a range of steps which can help reduce risk of injury or loss of life.

QMS VIDEO ▶

To view the safety at calving video and Basil's four point plan keep you, your family and staff safe at calving, visit www.qmscotland.co.uk/video-library



Dr Basil Lowman of SAC Consulting, a division of SRUC (Scotland's Rural College), highlights a range of tips in a four-point plan which he talks through in the video. Much of the advice in the video is also applicable to those working with animals in a bull beef system.

"Every farmer knows that even the most docile cows can sometimes be extra-protective towards their calves and, therefore, all cows should be treated with respect," said Basil.

"It is important for cows to be familiar with staff or family members who may be assisting with calving so they do not feel threatened by people they are less used to," he added.

In the QMS video, Basil recommends some measures to reduce risks during indoor calving, based on simple planning.

He said: "Three to four weeks before calving is due to start, take family or staff members who will be working with calving cows into the calving area and identify the escape routes. You should also check if you have a mobile signal in the pen so you can call for help if need be."

OVER THE PAST DECADE

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PEOPLE HAVE BEEN KILLED IN LIVESTOCK-RELATED INCIDENTS ON SCOTTISH FARMS.

He points out that a ring feeder can be a useful tool in a calving pen, either to keep between yourself and the cow or to jump into and call for help.

"Cull aggressive cows from the herd and, in the case of very aggressive animals, their daughters too."



CASE STUDY



One family who know first-hand what it is like to be at the receiving end of a head-butt from a newly calved heifer, is the Penny family from Shannas Farm near Peterhead.

Margaret Penny works with her husband John and their herd of 130 pedigree Limousins on a daily basis and the couple pride themselves on breeding docile cattle, so she thought it would never happen to her.

In April 2014 Margaret had been taking the precautionary steps of walking through the calving heifers every day, but when the last one calved she popped into the pen with a stick to try to stop an older calf pinching the colostrum. As she walked away, the heifer butted her in the back, she turned round and was hit in the ribs and neck before escaping over the water trough.

She suffered multiple bi-lateral fractures of her ribs, a punctured lung and a neck injury but fortunately has since made a full recovery.

Margaret said, "This heifer had never shown any signs of aggression before, so it just goes to show you can never be sure. I am fortunate as my injuries could have been a lot worse, but next time I see an older calf pinching colostrum, I'll just leave it."

The Pennys gave this heifer another chance; however, this year when she came to calving again, she showed signs of aggression towards Margaret so she is now with a batch of cows to be culled. Margaret said, "We breed all our own replacements and our cattle are all very quiet, but this heifer definitely took a dislike to me and it proves that you can never be too careful when handling cattle, particularly around calving time."

