



Livestock and Public Rights of Way

Many people enjoy accessing the countryside along public rights of way or across open access land, but it should be remembered that it is a working environment with farm animals that can potentially be dangerous. In recent years there have been some well publicised local incidents with cattle: in particular, a 62 year old man from Cornwall was killed whilst walking near Ashbourne and a Derbyshire fell runner was injured in a race near Sheffield. However, given the large numbers of people who access the countryside, such incidents are very rare and the risk can be reduced further if sensible precautions are followed.

To enjoy the countryside at its best, it is wise to be aware of your surroundings and to remain vigilant, especially when a path enters a field or where you cannot see the whole field. Try to stay away from animals and be aware of their movements. At all times, it is especially important to be sympathetic to farm animals rearing their young and to give them space.

We offer the following advice - with thanks to the *Ramblers* and the *National Farmers' Union (NFU)*:

Advice for Users:

Do:

- Try to avoid getting between cows and their calves.
- Be prepared for cattle to react to your presence, especially if you have a dog with you.
- Move quickly and quietly around the herd.
- Keep your dog close and under effective control on a lead around cows and sheep.

Don't:

- Don't hold onto your dog. If threatened by cattle, let go to allow the dog to run to safety.
- Don't put yourself at risk. If necessary, find another way around the cattle and re-join the public right of way as soon as possible.
- Don't panic or run. Most cattle will stop before they reach you. If they follow, walk on quietly.

Advice for Farmers:

- Farmers also have a responsibility for the safety of people crossing their fields where there is public access. Farmers who keep livestock in fields crossed by public rights of way may face civil and/or criminal proceedings if their livestock injures members of the public.
- If you are aware that a particular animal is likely to be upset by people using a public right of way or is likely to behave aggressively towards them, you should consider whether they should be in a place with public access – or one where people are known to stray.
- Some livestock species and breeds of bull belonging to recognised dairy breeds eg Friesian, Holstein or Jersey are prohibited from being in a field with a public right of way.
- There is further information in the NFU Business Guide 407 - Livestock on Rights of Way

If an incident occurs:

- If you are attacked or suffer a frightening incident, report this to the landowner and the Highway Authority (Derbyshire County Council in Derbyshire – who can be contacted by emailing ete.prow@derbyshire.gov.uk or telephone 01629 533262), and also the Health and Safety Executive and the Police if it is of a serious nature.