

SAFETY ALERT



Cows and Calving Season: Stay Alert, Keep Your Distance

During calving season, cows can become highly protective of their calves and may act unpredictably when people or vehicles approach. A cow can move quickly and may charge, kick, knock a person down or crush them against a vehicle, gate, fence or other fixed object. This alert applies whenever Meridian people or contractors travel through, park besides, or work within farmland where cattle and calves may be present.

Important information & safety reminders

Treat every cow with a calf as a potential threat. Stop, reassess and contact the landowner or site contact if safe access cannot be confirmed.

- Plan the route before entering farmland. Confirm where stock and calves are located, who controls the stock, gate arrangements and a reliable means of communication.
- Never approach, touch or move a calf. Do not place yourself between a cow and her calf.
- Watch for warning signs such as a fixed stare, head lowered, pawing, bellowing, rapid approach or the cow positioning herself between you and the calf.
- Use the vehicle as a protective barrier. Slow down, keep well clear, avoid sounding the horn, and do not drive into or split a cow-calf group.
- Do not leave the vehicle to open a gate when cattle are close, blocking the route or showing interest in you. Stop in a safe position and contact the farmer/site contact to move or secure the stock.
- Where manual gate access is unavoidable, inspect from inside the vehicle first. Have an agreed safe system, keep the engine running (where appropriate), position the vehicle for a quick retreat, identify an escape route, and use a second competent person or landowner assistance where required.
- Keep fences, gates and latches in sound condition. Gates should open freely, be operable without entering the paddock where reasonably practicable, and not create pinch or crush points. Report damaged fencing or insecure stock immediately.
- Never climb through or over a fence into a paddock containing a protective cow. Maintain separation and postpone the task if the risk cannot be controlled.



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Emergency response — if threatened or charged

- **If you are inside a Ute or car:** stay inside, close windows and close doors. Do not get out to protect the vehicle or open the gate.
- If safe, calmly reverse or drive away without accelerating toward cattle. Do not attempt to push through stock. If the route is blocked, remain in the vehicle and call the farmer/site contact for assistance.
- Use the horn only if needed to warn a person of immediate danger; noise can further agitate cattle.
- **If you are outside:** do not run blindly or turn your back. Move calmly toward the nearest substantial barrier, vehicle, gate or safe side of a fence. Put a solid object between you and the cow and leave the calf behind.
- Notify the Meridian person in charge and report the hazard, near miss, injury, damaged fence or escaped stock through the required reporting process. Do not re-enter until the landowner or competent stock handler confirms the area is safe.

Questions to prompt discussion:

- Which work locations or access routes place us near cattle during calving season?
- How do we confirm stock location and gate arrangements before arriving?
- Which gates can be opened without leaving the vehicle, and where is farmer assistance required?
- What warning signs would make us stop, retreat or postpone the task?
- Does everyone know the emergency location details, communication method and nearest safe refuge?
- Are fencing, gates, latches and signage adequate to keep people separated from cows and calves?

Key message: If cattle are close to a gate or you cannot maintain safe separation, stay in the vehicle and contact the farmer or site contact. The job can wait until the stock are secured.