

CROWD GATE SAFETY

Farm operators and farm workers should be alert to potential hazards from milking parlor holding area crowd gates and other powered gates involved in handling cattle in and around the parlor. Powered gates can crush body parts or prevent breathing and cause asphyxiation.

POTENTIAL HAZARDS:

- Being crushed against a wall
- Being pinned between the gate and a post or other structural member of the parlor or cattle handling system
- Electrocutation

PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

1. A crowd gate should have a mechanical stop that physically prevents it from reaching the back wall of the holding area at any time, including during maintenance and repair as well as normal operation. The stop should maintain a gap between the gate and wall large enough for a person to fit comfortably; allowing the gate to get closer creates a potential crush zone. Electrical or mechanical stop switches or brakes, to control the crowd gate motor, can malfunction or fail and should never be relied upon to prevent the gate from reaching the back wall. Mechanical stops should never be removed.

2. Crowd gates with a horizontal bar across the bottom should not be so close to the ground that a person who falls or is knocked over would get pinned against the floor.

3. Controls or emergency releases for gates in the milking parlor itself should be located so that a person inadvertently pinned in the gate can reach them.

4. People working around gates powerful enough to seriously injure or kill should not be alone, so that assistance can be given if someone does become trapped.

5. Always shut off and lock out all power (electrical, pneumatic, or hydraulic) prior to any cleaning, maintenance, or service activities, to prevent crushing, entanglement, or unexpected startup. This means using lockout/tagout procedures for switches, switch boxes, circuit breaker boxes, or other controls, to prevent energy from passing through and prevent other workers from turning the power back on. It also means releasing any stored pneumatic or hydraulic energy which could cause movement of the gate.

6. Block or lock in place gates that can drop down or potentially move even after the power has been turned off, due to gravity or some other external force. Service procedures could inadvertently result in removing or deactivating a support or restraint and cause unexpected movement.

7. Proper training, and periodic retraining and review, are necessary for all people working with or near this equipment, including those who may be passing through or otherwise have incidental contact. Everyone working in or near the milking parlor should know how to shut off any piece of parlor equipment, including gates. Proper training, and periodic retraining and review, are important. Trainers should always read and understand the operator's manual and train workers to follow the manufacturer's safety instructions.

This is a general list of hazards and injury prevention measures for working with crowd gates and is not meant to cover every possible circumstance. Individual operations, facilities, systems, machines, or situations may have unique hazards, and it is the responsibility of the farm operator or manager to be aware of such hazards and take appropriate action.

LEARN FROM OTHERS IN A RECESSION

We learn something new every day on the farm, but sometimes some of our best lessons come from other industries. Here are some lessons other companies have learned from previous recessions that can translate to success on the dairy:

1. IMPROVE EFFICIENCIES.

Southwest Airlines made flights more affordable by filling more seats on each flight. They're also working on redesigning airport gates to streamline boarding.

Capture the value of every minute by identifying tasks that could be streamlined and working with employees to perfect procedures and processes.

2. DIFFERENTIATE YOURSELF.

Nestle, the world's biggest food company, keeps rolling out new products to meet different market needs. Example: Nespresso coffee pods. These capsules contain the right amount of fresh, finely ground coffee for one espresso.

While it's not always easy to differentiate your product, there are ways to make sure you are meeting market needs. Continue to strive for the highest milk quality possible. If you are in a market that pays for solids, maximize milk fat and protein. Consider adopting standards for animal welfare and environmental management that reinforce and document your commitment to each.

3. FOCUS ON TEAMWORK.

Vodafone, the world's largest wireless company, is partnering with other innovators to create faster services.

By using herd consultants, you can work toward a similar goal of providing your herd with the best environment for optimal performance.

4. BE PRACTICAL.

Hewlett-Packard is using two-thirds of its research and development funds toward practical advancements.

Making improvements on the dairy may involve simple changes. Advancements don't always have to be the most expensive; small changes can help keep cows at peak performance.

5. INVEST INTERNALLY.

Toyota has a higher operating margin than other vehicle manufacturers because the company invests in its own systems and lean manufacturing initiatives.

Your employees are vital to your herd's success. Through proper training, refresher courses and continuing education programs, you can keep everyone on the same page and the dairy functioning properly.

Editor's note: The following information is from Mike Cain, Senior Business Manager at Arm & Hammer Animal Nutrition.