

Farm Safety Week 2019

CASE STUDY: WILLIE HARPER, BRIDGE OF WEIR



Being attacked by a cow protecting its calf, has been a serious eye opener for NFU Scotland Regional Chairman for Forth and Clyde, Willie Harper.

In May this year, Willie, who was tagging 200 calves in a field, failed to risk assess the situation when coming out of the pick-up, not checking the temperament of the



mother of one particular calf.

As he approached the calf, the mother went for Willie, of Gryffewraes Farm, Bridge of Weir, a butting him to the ground.

Willie explained: “It was around 9.30pm at night, and without thinking or carrying out an assessment of the situation I found myself being butted to the ground by the mother protecting her calf. I went into the foetal position to try to protect myself whilst trying to get away from her. As I moved so did she, stamping on my back and spine and my legs.

“She eventually left me alone. Thankfully I had my mobile phone in my pocket and managed to phone my wife. If I hadn’t of have my phone with me, I don’t know what I would have done, particularly as I was lone working and it was getting dark.”

Thankfully once at the hospital and with extensive checks carried out Willie was found to have no lasting damage – apart from his pride of course.

“The ironic thing is that I do tend to carry out individual assessments of the cows prior to approaching calves normally I have equipment – a cow catcher for example - to help me to see to the calves safely,” explained Willie. “I invested in something to protect me in these circumstances and failed to use it.

“I also use a field for ‘naughty cows’ for those that are a risk, cause problems or have a temperament. This means I can reduce the risk when dealing with other cows and carry out assessments quicker. I know that livestock can be so unpredictable though, you just never know when a placid cow might turn on you. I’m certainly more careful as a result of the accident and ensure I use the equipment I have available to make my job safer.”

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