

DATE: May 24, 1996

FROM: Minnesota Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (MN FACE)
Program Minnesota Department of Health

SUBJECT: MN FACE Investigation 96MN00701
Farmer Dies From Injuries Sustained When Attacked By A Bull

SUMMARY

A 72-year-old farmer (victim) died from injuries he sustained when he was attacked and injured by a bull. The bull was kept in a barn and an adjoining cattle lot and pasture. On the day of the incident, the victim and a farm worker discussed the need to repair a water tank located in the pasture. Before working on the water tank, they worked separately doing a variety of farm chores. When the farm worker finished the tasks she was doing, she walked past the barn to enter the lot and pasture where she believed the victim had already gone to repair the water tank. While still outside the fenced lot and pasture, she looked for but could not see him near the water tank. She looked around and noticed the bull standing near the victim who was laying face down near the barn. She yelled for help from a local veterinarian who had arrived at the farm a few minutes before the victim was discovered. The veterinarian placed a call to emergency personnel who arrived at the scene shortly after they were notified. They reached the victim after the bull was secured in a pen in the barn. Resuscitation efforts were performed on the victim while he was transported to a local hospital where he was pronounced dead on arrival. MN FACE investigators concluded that to reduce the likelihood of similar occurrences, the following guidelines should be followed:

- workers should exercise caution whenever they are working with or near farm animals; and
- whenever possible, workers should move and isolate animals from livestock areas

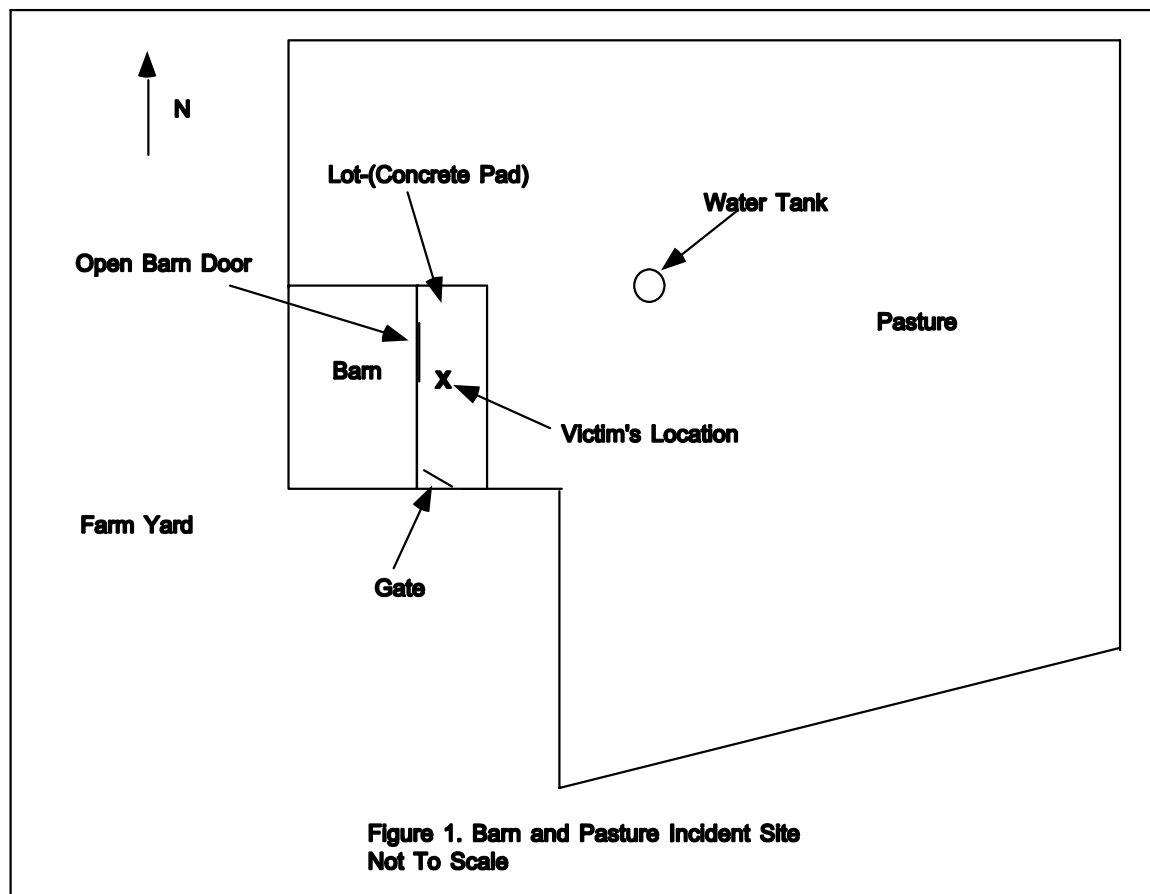
before v

INTRODUCTION

On February 2, 1996, MN FACE investigators were notified of a farm work-related fatality that

occurred on November 22, 1995. The county sheriff's department was contacted and releasable information obtained. Information obtained included a copy of their report of the incident. A site investigation was conducted on April 3, 1996 by a MN FACE investigator. During MN FACE investigations, incident information is obtained from a variety of sources such as law enforcement agencies, county coroners and medical examiners, employers, coworkers and family members.

INVESTIGATION



A 72-year-old farmer (victim) died of injuries he sustained when he was attacked by a bull. The bull weighed approximately 2300 pounds and was kept in a barn and an adjoining cattle lot and pasture (Figure 1.) on the east side of a barn. The bull had been owned by the victim for approximately two and one-half years and had never attacked anyone prior to the incident. There were also 25-30 dairy cows in the cattle lot and pasture but none of them were in the vicinity of the victim when he was found. The animals were able to freely roam between the barn, the cattle lot and the pasture.

On the day of the incident, the victim and a farm worker discussed the need to repair a water tank located several hundred feet from the barn in the farm pasture. Before working on the tank, they worked separately doing a variety of chores at the farm. When the farm worker finished the tasks she was doing, she walked past the south end of the barn to enter the lot and pasture where she believed the victim had already gone to repair the water tank. While still outside the fenced cattle lot and pasture, she looked for but could not see him. She looked around and noticed the bull standing near the victim who was laying face down along the east side of the barn. She yelled for help from a local veterinarian who had arrived at the farm a few minutes before the victim was discovered. The veterinarian placed a call to emergency personnel who arrived at the scene shortly after they were notified. They reached the victim after the bull was secured in a pen in the barn. Resuscitation efforts were performed on the victim while he was transported to a local hospital where he was pronounced dead on arrival.

The victim had owned and worked with farm animals, including bulls throughout his adult life. He was aware of the dangers associated with large animals and consistently warned family members and farm workers to exercise caution when entering the cattle lot and pasture. Since he entered the cattle lot and pasture alone, it could not be determined if he was attacked while walking toward the tank or while returning from the water tank. It also could not be determined whether he was aware of the bull's location but still was attacked or whether he forgot that the bull was somewhere in the area and he was unexpectedly attacked.

CAUSE OF DEATH

The cause of death listed on the death certificate was massive blunt chest trauma.

RECOMMENDATIONS/DISCUSSION

Recommendation #1: Workers should exercise caution whenever they are working with or near farm animals.

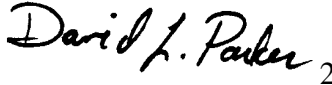
Discussion: In general, farm animals are not aggressive and are unlikely to attack farm workers. However, under certain conditions such as when they are herded into or held in confined areas, or when they are protecting their offspring, they may become aggressive and attack workers. In addition, because of the unpredictability of farm animals they may occasionally attack workers even if unprovoked. Workers should exercise caution whenever they are working with or near farm animals, no matter what the situation or apparent temperament of the animals. Whenever workers

enter livestock pens, lots or fenced pastures, they should always be aware of the location of confined animals. This is especially important if the area contains large animals that may be capable of causing serious injury to workers. Workers should also consider driving motor vehicles such as tractors or pick-ups into livestock areas to provide possible areas of protection and means of escape from livestock areas.

Recommendation #2: Whenever possible, workers should move and isolate animals from livestock areas before work is performed in those areas.

Discussion: Whenever work is performed in livestock areas while large animals are present, workers are exposed to the risks of being injured by the animals. These risks may be reduced or eliminated by safely moving and isolating animals from livestock areas before work is performed in those areas. In this case, the bull that attacked the victim could have been herded into a pen inside the barn before the task of repairing the water tank was begun. If the bull had been isolated from the pasture area where the water tank was located, this fatality might have been prevented.

George Wahl, M.S.
Senior Safety Investigator
MN FACE


David L. Parker, M.D., M.P.H.
Principal Investigator
MN FACE