

**DATE:** October 27, 1995

**FROM:** Minnesota Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (MN FACE)

Program

Minnesota Department of Health

**SUBJECT:** MN FACE Investigation 95MN03401

Farmer Dies From Injuries Sustained After Being Attacked By A Bull

## **SUMMARY**

The victim was alone at the time that the incident occurred. This report is based upon a review of a written sheriff's department report, and a review of their photos and video tape of the incident site. Additional information was obtained during an interview with the county sheriff who responded to the scene.

A 41-year-old farmer (victim) died after he was attacked and injured by one or more bull. The bulls escaped when they pushed down a section of a lot fence that consisted of steel cattle panels wired to steel fence posts. The victim was tilling a field in preparation for spring planting when he noticed that several bulls had gotten out of the fenced lot. He drove his tractor to the edge of his farm place, stopped, got off of it, and began to herd the animals toward the fenced lot. He herded the animals between several parallel confinement buildings that were approximately 40 to 50 feet apart. When he was near the middle of the area between the confinement buildings, one or more of the bulls turned and charged the victim. He was unable to avoid the bull(s) and was knocked to the ground within several feet of one of the confinement buildings. He may have been repeatedly attacked by the animal(s) since there were many fresh hoof prints in the area near where he was found. The victim's wife discovered him but was unable to get near him because of the aggressive bulls. She placed a call to emergency personnel who arrived at the scene shortly after they were notified. They reached the victim after the bulls were safely herded from the scene. The victim was pronounced dead at the scene, and it was determined that he probably died a short time before being found by his wife. MN FACE investigators concluded that to reduce the likelihood of similar occurrences, the following guidelines should be followed:

- livestock lot fences should be constructed of sufficient strength to contain all animals confined within the fenced area; and
- livestock lot fences should be routinely inspected and maintained.

## **INTRODUCTION**

On June 29, 1995, MN FACE investigators were notified of a farm work-related fatality that occurred on May 1, 1995. The county sheriff's department was contacted and releasable information obtained. Information obtained included a copy of their report of the incident and copies of their photos of the incident site. Additional information was obtained by viewing a sheriff's department's video tape of the incident site and during an interview with the county sheriff who responded to the scene. A site investigation was not conducted by MN FACE investigators.

## **INVESTIGATION**

A 41-year-old farmer (victim) died after he was injured by one or more bull. The victim was tilling a field in preparation for spring planting when he noticed that several bulls had gotten out of a fenced lot. The animals escaped when they pushed down a section of the lot fence that consisted of steel cattle panels wired to steel fence posts. There were approximately 12 to 15 bulls of varying weight that had escaped from the fenced lot. The estimated weight of the smallest bulls was approximately 500 pounds. Two of the largest bulls were estimated to weigh approximately 1,500 to 1,800 pounds each.

Upon observing that the bulls were not in their fenced lot, the victim drove his tractor to the edge of his farm place, parked it, and got off of it to chase the animals toward the fenced lot. He herded the animals between several parallel confinement buildings that were approximately 40 to 50 feet apart. When he was near the middle of the area between the buildings, one or more of the bulls turned and charged the victim. Unable to avoid the bull(s) due to the confinement buildings on both sides of the area, he was knocked to the ground within several feet of one of the buildings. He may have been repeatedly attacked by the animal(s) since there were many fresh hoof prints in the soft sod near the victim. The victim's wife discovered him shortly after the incident occurred but was unable to get near him because of the bulls. She placed a call to emergency personnel who arrived at the scene shortly after they were notified. They reached the victim after the bulls were safely herded from the scene. The victim was pronounced dead at the scene, and it was determined that he probably died a

short time before being found by his wife.

The emergency personnel who were called to the scene observed that one of the largest bulls was very aggressive. The bull continually pawed the ground and bellowed loudly as the animals were herded back into their fenced lot.

## **CAUSE OF DEATH**

The cause of death listed on the death certificate was blunt trauma - multiple injuries.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS/DISCUSSION**

**Recommendation #1:** Livestock lot fences should be constructed of sufficient strength to contain all animals confined within the fenced area.

***Discussion:*** Livestock confinement fences are used to keep animals within designated areas and to protect farm workers and family members from the animals. In general, farm animals are not aggressive. 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. Workers should exercise caution whenever they are working with or near farm animals, no matter what the situation or apparent temperament of the animals. Because of the unpredictability of farm animals, lot fences should be sufficiently strong to prevent the escape of the largest animals confined within the fenced area. In this case, a portion of the lot fence consisted of steel cattle panels wired to steel fence posts. This was not adequate to contain animals that weighed more than 1,500 pounds. If the fence used to contain the bulls in this incident had been of sufficient strength and stability to prevent the animals from escaping, this fatality might have been prevented.

**Recommendation #2:** Livestock lot fences should be routinely inspected and maintained.

***Discussion:*** Livestock lot fences are subjected to a variety of factors that over a period of time lessen the strength and integrity of the fence. Environmental conditions such as rain, sleet, snow, and freezing and thawing of the ground can weaken or loosen support posts. Wire fence materials and fasteners are likely to rust and may become brittle and break with age. In addition, fences may be damaged or knocked down by large animals, like the bulls in this incident, which are capable of exerting large forces on fences and fence posts. The strength and stability of livestock fences should be maintained by regular routine inspections. Furthermore, all damaged portions of livestock fences should be immediately repaired to a level that will securely contain the animals contained within the

fence.

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