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Monthly Safety Blast

Produced by the Southwest Center for Agricultural Health, Injury Prevention and Education

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Needlestick Prevention on the Farm

Over 80% of farm workers vaccinating animals have accidentally stuck themselves with a needle. Vaccines are the most common type of drug involved in needlestick injuries. They can occur when injecting farm animals with animal health products. If the animal suddenly jumps or moves, a worker could accidentally be stuck by the needle. Injuries have also occurred when workers have carried syringes loaded with medication in their pockets. These incidents should be considered serious as their effect on humans can vary greatly depending on the type of drug injected. Certain antibiotics and other medications designed for animals can result in severe medical reactions, or even death, if they are injected into a person.

Needlestick injuries can result in several types of injuries (from Agricultural Medicine, by Donham and Thelin, 2006). They include:

- Infection from a contaminated needle
- Infection from the product injected
- Inflammation from the product injected

Prevention and Control

Your employer should always direct you to the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for information on any drug or vaccine used in your facility. This will inform you of any risks or treatments associated with that drug. If you have questions about your safety after reading the MSDS for any compound used in your facility, you should consult with a physician to assess any specific health risks that you may have based on your contact with the product.



To ensure you understand the safety concerns related to compounds used in your facility and that you are confident in your ability to work with them, your employer should ask you to sign a Hazardous Chemical Disclosure Form. This form will be specific to the chemicals used in the facility. Women who do not feel comfortable working with hormones do not have to sign the form nor are they obligated to perform the specific task.

Prevention at the Worker Level

- Never remove needle caps by using your mouth.
- Do not recap needles except in rare instances when required as part of a medical procedure or protocol. Recapping causes more injuries than it prevents.
- Dispose of all sharps in designated puncture-proof sharps containers.
- Dispose of the used syringe with attached needle in the sharps container when injecting live vaccines or aspirating body fluids.
- Sharp containers should be located in every area of the workplace where sharps are used.
- Do not transfer sharps from one container to another.
- Devices that cut needles prior to disposal should not be used because they increase the potential for aerosolization of the contents.
- Never dispose of sharps in the regular trash.



Prevention at the Management Level

- Make sure employees are trained on hazards of handling drugs, hormones, vaccines, etc.
- Develop a training plan that includes information delivery in written and verbal formats relevant to the MSDS and demonstration of the safety information and assessment for understanding.
- Consider developing a policy for reporting and documentation of each needle stick injury.
- Develop and implement a protocol to ensure medical evaluation of all needle stick injuries.
- Document the periodic evaluation of safe needle devices that may prevent recapping action.
- Develop, communicate and enforce standard operating procedures for safe sharps handling. Implement satellite locations of sharps containers to make immediate disposal of used sharps more convenient for employee practice.

What to do in Case of Accidental Needlesticks

DO:

- Read the package insert, label, and MSDS for any medications administered to the animals, and use the product only as directed on the package or as directed by your veterinarian.
- Immediately report all accidental needlesticks to you supervisor.
- Use the product only as directed.

- Work with your veterinarian to determine how often you should change needles.

DON'T:

- Place your hands between the animal and the side of the stall when injecting drugs.
- Carry a syringe and needle in your pocket.
- Use damaged or bent needles.



Take the [Needlestick Prevention on the Farm quiz](#) to test your knowledge!

Resources:

- Donham, K., Thelin, A. (2006). *Agricultural Medicine: Occupational and Environmental Health for the Health Professions 1st Ed.* Ames, Iowa: Blackwell Publishing Professional.
- <http://search.cdc.gov/search?query=needlestick+prevention&utf8=%E2%9C%93&affiliate=cdc-main>
- <http://articles.extension.org/pages/31643/swine-worker-health-and-safety:-needlesticks>

Disclaimer: The facts and information listed above are merely suggestions for your safety, but are in no way a comprehensive and exhausted list of all actions needed to insure your safety.

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