

5

How to lift a cow's foot

- always consider safety of the operator
- always consider safety of the cow

Facilities for restraining cows and lifting the front or back feet vary widely in type from farm to farm, and it is beyond the scope of these guidelines to provide hard and fast rules. Crushes and races vary in their ability to provide safe access and thorough examination of cattle feet, and often accessibility to the front feet is poor.

5.1 How to lift a front foot.

- Cows can kick well forward with their hindfeet, so when examining a front foot, to avoid facial and head injuries, always rope the hindfoot (on the same side of the animal) first. The foot should be allowed to rest on the ground, but its movement forward should be restricted.
 - If the cow is excitable, upset or frightened have an assistant apply a tail-jack, or consider sedation of the cow.
 - Fasten a rope to the lame foreleg just above the fetlock, and well below the knee. Use a slipknot or a rope with a loop spliced at one end.
 - Pass the rope over a rail at about the level of the cow's elbow, from the inside to the outside of the crush or bale.
 - Loop the rope back around the leg at the same level as the original tie.
 - Pass the rope over a lower rail at about the level of the cow's knee, from the inside to the outside of the crush or bale.
 - Lift the foot, using the two passes of rope as a pulley.
 - To make examination possible, bring the foot to the outside of the crush or bale, either above or below a lower rail, and lash it securely to the rail so movement is prevented.
- An alternative approach, which is applicable where cattle are restrained in a head crush, is as follows:
 - An assistant leans against the back end of the cow so as to restrict her ability to kick forward.



- A rope (with a slip knot at the end so that it can form a loop around the leg) is fastened around the fore limb to be examined. The loop is placed midway between the knee and the fetlock.



- The end of the rope is then taken over the cow and around a rail on the other side of the cow.



- The rope is then passed back under the cows “arm-pit” and again back over the rail on the other side. This loop of rope acts a sling to support the cow.



- The assistant (who is still leaning against the back end of the cow) pulls on the end of this rope while the operator lifts the front foot.



- The front foot can then be examined.

It should be realised that in many cases it is more difficult to adequately restrain the front foot of a cow than it is to adequately restrain her the hind foot. In some cases it is safer, and makes for an easier examination of the foot, to cast the cow and restrain her on her side so that the foot can be adequately examined and treated.

5.2 How to lift a back foot.

- Use a slipknot or a rope with a loop spliced at one end. The rope can be fastened to the lame hindleg at one of two sites - either just above the hock, causing pressure on the achilles tendon and so restricting movement, or just above the fetlock so that the foot can be securely lashed to a rail or upright, restricting movement.
- Irrespective of the method of lifting, it is important that subsequent movement is well restricted; otherwise kicking during examination can cause the operator's tools to be knocked, and driven into the operator's hands or other parts of the body, causing injury.
- The rope is then passed over a high rail, back around the leg above the hock, and then back to the same or a lower rail. Pulling on the rope will cause a pulley action. Once the foot is lifted, it is roped to a rail or upright securely so that movement up and down, or forward and backward is very limited.



A loop is placed around the limb to be lifted. The loop is placed just above the hock.



The rope is then taken to a rail above the cow, back down around the hock and up to a rail on the other side.



The operator pulls on the rope to pull back the leg and assistant pulls on the end of the rope which is wrapped around the bar. This lifts the leg off the ground.



A soft rope is then looped around the raised limb, just above the fetlock.



This rope is in placed around the upright as shown.



This rope is then pulled so that the leg can be lashed to the upright bar preventing the cow from movement. This rope continues to be held by the operator so that it can be let go if the cow throws herself to the ground.



The foot is now well restrained so that it can be adequately and safely examined.

- It is preferable that the rope is then held by an assistant rather than tying it up. If the cow slips in the bale or crush, or goes down, it is important that the rope is released quickly to prevent dislocation of the hip.