

## Handling Dairy Calves

Young dairy calves are normally curious and frisky and very rarely demonstrate aggressive behavior. However, it is still important to consider safe handling practices. All cattle have blind spots, starting with the point of shoulder to the tail. Thus it is always best to approach a calf from the front and move to the rear if desired. Extend your hand to the animal's head slowly but stopping 6 inches from the calf. The calf will most likely move her head forward in an effort to sniff you. She will likely either start to lick your fingers or move her head and body backwards. A WSU student will help you restrain your calf with a rope halter and will instruct you on how to tie a quick release knot. You must practice tying that knot many times until you can demonstrate mastery. Never wrap the rope around your hand or other part of your body. Gather up the loose ends of the rope in a bunch and hold the bunch tightly. If the calf should begin to jerk and you find it difficult to hold the rope, let go of the rope. Your wellbeing is far more important than the calf's. Whenever first restraining a calf, allow her to get settled to her new position before engaging her in an activity. Cattle will kick forward with their rear legs when provoked. To avoid being kicked, minimize your contact with the animal from the point of shoulder to the front of the rear leg. Working with the animal at the point of shoulder forward, or from the hip to the tail are the safest spots. Always wear long pants and never wear open toed shoes. Always wash your hands immediately after working with cattle.

## General Farm Safety

Stay away from all farm machinery, giving extra clearance to operating machinery. Do not climb anything on the dairy, especially hay bales and fences. Stay clear of areas where liquid is stored. Be careful around electric wires. Most often the electric wires will be turned off when you are on the dairy, but just in case, do not touch electric wires unless by the plastic handles. The electric wires will not hurt you, but they may cause a shock that is similar to a static electricity shock. Stay away from all other livestock on the farm, unless you are working with WSU student or chaperone or parent. Do not disturb any animal on the farm, including your calf, while it is feeding.