

Yards and Loading Facilities

Fact Sheet



INTRODUCTION

When establishing or reviewing yarding and loading facilities for livestock, it is best to first consider what setup will:

- Be practical?
- Be safest for you?
- Maximise the welfare of your animals?
- Address all legal requirements?

Well-designed yards and loading facilities can allow you to handle and manage your animals in a safe, effortless and relatively stress-free manner.

It is important to understand that whether you own one animal or thousands, you must have some form of yarding equipment and loading ramps, or access to these facilities.

They are essential for you to be able to:

- tag animals,
- administer vaccines and medication,
- conduct vet inspections, and
- load/unload your animals for transportation.



DESIGNING A FACILITY

These are some of key elements that you will need to consider when designing or reviewing your animal handling facility.

SITE AND LOCATION

Make sure you consider the following:

- accessibility
- drainage capacity
- soil type
- shade
- water
- protection from dust and wind
- where your fenced off working area is, and
- proximity to mustering point

Once you have chosen your site, ensure that you have obtained all the building/structural permits you'll need.

SIGNAGE

What signage and directives for visitors are you required to have onsite? There are laws that require you to have biosecurity signage in place, so make sure you understand your responsibilities. Read up on the changes at <http://bit.ly/3YXhKhQ>

YARDING CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS

Choose the materials that will be the most sturdy, durable and safe for your needs and usage. For example, non-slip concrete is beneficial in some areas, but for pens where animals may be held for longer periods, the surface should be softer to prevent foot soreness. You also need to choose materials that can be easily cleaned.

ANIMAL NEEDS

Ensure that you have feeding and watering facilities for your animals.

Using elements like curved raceways, rubber coverings, and reducing areas where animals move from light to shade can make it easier for them to move around.

TALK TO YOUR NEIGHBOURS

If possible, visit their yards as they may be able to provide you with advice. Your stock agent would be another good person to talk to.



STORAGE AND OTHER FEATURES

Products, such as vaccines, are often needed near yards, so including a suitable, lockable facility in the design (such as a fridge or locker) will be helpful.

You should consider whether you will require specific sheep or cattle drafting facilities or features:

- Crushes come in several designs, with a variety of side gates, vet gates, head bails (where you restrain animals), back slide gates, chin bars, animal squeezing (restraining) functions.
- Do you need weigh scales?
- Raceways and ramps need to be adequate width, an efficient gradient for effective stock movement and loading, and should also be in an accessible position.
- Gate width, height and position can greatly affect how efficiently you are able to move stock through the yards.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Working cattle and sheep in an intensive setting increases your OH&S risk. Cattle especially have a significant weight advantage over a human, and combined with stress or fear, this can significantly increase risks to the safety of both you and the animal.

There are many factors you should consider reducing the risk of injuries or illness including:

- Non-slip and well-draining floors to minimise the risk of anyone slipping and/or falling.
- Gates should be well greased and with good latches to ensure that they can be closed quickly and effectively.
- A sheltered area to avoid negative health repercussions (e.g. sunburn).
- Appropriate facilities for rubbish disposal.
- Ability to restrict public access.
- Avoid putting head/legs/arms into a raceway while animals are moving through it.
- Eliminate sharp or protruding objects (e.g. from railings) to prevent injuries.
- Avoid bending or reaching over an animal's head.
- Minimise use of dogs, electric prodders, loud noises and flapping clothing.
- Have hard copies of the material data safety sheets (MSDS) for the chemicals you use.
- Have a plan of what to do in the case of an emergency.

Understanding why and how animals move, will significantly assist you in handling animals effectively, humanely and safely. Ensure that you always use best practice animal handling techniques and ensure that your employees do the same.

TAKE HOME MESSAGES

Your yard design should consider and suit its intended use and purpose.

Human and animal welfare must be accounted for in design and use of facilities.

Make sure you adhere to any legal requirements when designing and utilizing your facilities.

Have a plan in case of injuries or emergencies.

FURTHER LINKS

National Stock Yards

<http://www.nationalstockyards.com.au/>

Department of Primary Industries

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/beef-cattle/equip/cattle-yard-and-design/under-100-head>

Agriculture Victoria

<https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/beef/handling-and-management/cattle-handling-facility-50-to-300-head>

For further information, please contact the VFF Livestock Group on 1300 882 833 or by email to stocksense@vff.org.au

Disclaimer: All care is taken in the preparation of the information and published materials produced by the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) including but not limited to errors, defects or omissions in the information provided. VFF does not make any representations or give any warranties about the accuracy, reliability, completeness, or suitability for any particular purpose in the preparation of the information and published materials. This publication is intended for general information purposes only and does not constitute financial, legal, investment, production, or marketing advice. To the maximum extent permitted by law, the VFF and all persons acting on behalf of the VFF in preparing documents, are excluded from all and any liability for any loss or damage of any kind arising in relation to this publication including any reliance on the information contained herein.



Victorian Farmers Federation
Farrer House, Level 3, 24 Collins St
Melbourne VIC 3000
Telephone: 1300 882 833
stocksense@vff.org.au
www.vff.org.au/project/stock-sense/