

## How Dangerous Are Cows on UK Roads?

It is Summer time again; that time when we look to go out walking and enjoying the countryside. Cows grazing in a field seem like the image of tranquillity.

However in 2015 the HSE officially declared cows as the most dangerous large animals in the UK with 74 people having been killed by cows in the last 15 years. The majority of victims of severe injuries caused by cattle were farm workers, accounting for 56 of the 74 reported fatalities. The remaining 18 however were members of the public, 17 of whom were walking dogs.

It is usually bulls that make people wary. Indeed, cows are very docile animals, often unbothered by people walking in their fields. However, when they have calves it's a different story. When there are calves in a field, if threatened, cows will become aggressive to protect their young.

When it comes to public liability and the risk owed to the public farmers and cattle keepers are fully aware that cows will become aggressive when protecting their young. Farmers have been advised

- (a) Where ever possible they should avoid keeping cows and calves in fields with public footpaths
- (b) Where this is not possible appropriate signage and optional protected walkways should be considered

Farmers and Land Managers have duty to assess the risk to members of the public when keeping cattle in a field crossed by a public right of way. Land managers have duty under Occupiers Liability Act 1957 and 1984 to take reasonable steps to keep people reasonably safe. The Animals Act 1971 makes the keeper of an animal "strictly liable" in most cases for injuries caused by their stock .

Dogs have been linked to all but one of the reported fatalities, and it is believed that cows see dogs as a threat above humans. Make sure to keep your dog under control at all times. If cows are charging you because they are reacting to your dog, let the dog go so that you can get to safety. Dogs usually run faster than cattle and will draw the cattle away from you.