Veterinary loss prevention program: Ladder safety in the veterinary setting

Ladder safety in the veterinary setting

Trainer's overview

To help your employees get the most out of their training sessions, trainers should:

- Conduct the training sessions in a relatively quiet and uninterrupted environment.
- Keep the sessions for the same time and day of the month (e.g., 12:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday).
- Give out employee handouts along with pencils/pens.
- Review the trainer's guide, employee handout, and any references.
- Keep the sessions to a maximum of 20 minutes.
- Give personal examples of incidents or prevention techniques that worked for them.
- Ensure all employees who attend sign the Safety Training Sign-in Sheet for documentation purposes.
- Conduct a second training session for the employees who could not attend the first session.

Trainer's guide

Background

Ladders are handy, simple tools to use, but they can be unsafe if not maintained or used properly. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), work-related falls from ladders caused 161 deaths and over 22, 700 nonfatal injuries, which resulted in lost days away from work in 2020.

In the veterinary setting, the most common ladder is the stepladder, which is six- to eight-feet high and made of fiberglass. Stepladders can also be made of aluminum or wood, but these are becoming more uncommon as fiberglass is lightweight and does not conduct electricity.

There also are extension ladders, which can be used to go onto a roof, provided that the ladder extends at least three feet higher than the roof.

Aluminum ladders are lighter and less expensive, but you cannot do anything associated with electricity if you're using an aluminum ladder.

If you have wooden ladders, ensure that they are in good condition, free of cracks, and have the proper labels in place, including the weight capacity label.

All ladders will have their weight capacity listed on them. Capacities range from a low of 200 pounds to 375 pounds and is meant to include all of the weight on the ladder, including that of the person, clothing, material, and tools.

Ladder safety in the veterinary setting

Trainer's Guide (continued)

Background (continued)

- **Important**: Do not climb the ladder if you think that the total weight will exceed the load capacity limit!

Take an inventory of the ladders to see what types and capacities are available. If there are more than one ladder on site, number them to make the required documented inspections easier.

Inspection of ladders:

- A qualified person should inspect the ladders frequently for visible defects, and after any occurrence that could affect their safe use.

Employee training requirements

[From Cal-OSHA Section 3276(f)]:

- Provide training on the safe use of ladders before an employee or supervisor uses a ladder. This training should address the following topics:
    - Importance of using ladders safely, including frequency and severity of injuries related to falls from ladders.
    - Selection, including types of ladders, proper length, maximum working loads, and electrical hazards.
    - Maintenance, inspection, and removal of damaged ladders from service.
    - Erecting ladders, including footing support, top support, securing, and angle of inclination.
    - Climbing and working on ladders, including user's position and points of contact with the ladder.

Common Causes of Ladder Accidents:

The most common causes include: (1) Overreaching while working on the ladders; (2) ladders not being securely placed or placed on unstable surfaces; (3) climbing ladders using only one hand; (4) carrying equipment or tools while climbing a ladder; (5) exceeding the weight capacity of the ladder; (6) standing on the top rung/step; (7) using damaged ladders; and (8) leaving tools or equipment on the ladders, which can fall off and hit someone on the head.

Prohibited uses:

- Do not use the ladders for anything other than what it was designed for.
- Do not climb on the cross bracing.
- Do not climb higher than waist height at the top of the ladder.
- Do not stand on the top step of a ladder.

Questions for discussion:

Question: Which ladder cannot be used around electricity?

Answer: Aluminum ladders.

Question: Can a stepladder be used in the partially open position if there is no space to fully open up the spreaders?

Answer: No, a stepladder can only be used in the fully open position.

Resources & Regulations:

Portable ladder regulations can be found in the General Industry Safety Orders, Section 3276 at http://www.dir.ca.gov/Title8/3276.html.

These regulations include training requirements for all employees (including supervisors) who use ladders as well as the inspection requirements.

References

American Ladder Institute. This website provides information, employee training, videos, and testing on ladder safety free of charge. All employees who use ladders should watch these videos as they can aid in their training. The videos can be found at http://www.laddersafetytraining.org

The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) has a printable quick card on portable ladder safety, which is available at: https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/portable_ladder_qc.pdf

Please complete the sign-in sheet.

Ladder safety in the veterinary setting

Attendance record

Date: _____ **Trainer**:_____

Print name: Signature:

Ladder safety in the veterinary setting

Employee handout

Overview

Ladders are handy, simple tools to use, but they can be unsafe if not maintained or used properly. To prevent injuries involving ladders, it is critical for employees and supervisors to understand the reasons and causes of ladder accidents.

The most common causes include:

1. Overreaching while working on the ladders;
2. ladders not being securely placed or placed on unstable surfaces;
3. climbing ladders using only one hand;
4. carrying equipment or tools while climbing a ladder;
5. exceeding the weight capacity of the ladder;
6. standing on the top rung/step;
7. using damaged ladders; and
8. leaving tools or equipment on the ladders, which can fall off and hit someone on the head.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), work-related falls from ladders caused 161 deaths and over 22, 700 nonfatal injuries, which resulted in lost days away from work in 2020.

To prevent serious injury or death, please:

1. Inspect the ladder before using it. Things to look at:
    a. Ensure feet (rubber shoes) are in place and are in good condition.
    b. Ensure each step is free from dirt/grease, and are straight, not bent.
    c. Confirm that all rivets and bolts are secure.
    d. Ensure spreaders are in good condition; can be locked in the fully open position and are not bent.
    e. Ensure braces are in place and secure.
2. Do NOT use damaged ladders. Report damage to management so it can be tagged out until fixed or replaced.
3. Do NOT exceed the weight limit, check the label on the side of the front rails. Also remember, the capacity includes all the combined weight of the person, clothing, materials, and tools.
4. Ensure it is on an even surface and always have the spreaders fully extended. Do NOT use partially open or when closed. There is a mark on the highest spot that you can step on. Do NOT step higher than allowed.

5. Always face the ladder while ascending or descending, maintaining three-point contact — both feet and at least one hand, or both hands and one foot.
6. Do NOT use a ladder for any purpose that it is not designed for.
7. Do NOT stand on the top step. Your waist should go no higher than the top step. If at that point you still cannot reach what you need, you must get a different ladder.

If using an extension ladder:

Ensure you will NOT be working around electrical lines. Maintain 10 feet from electrical lines.

Use someone to hold the ladder steady while you are on it, or use eave clamps to hold it in place.

Ensure the rope, pulley, and rung locks are working well.

Set up at a 4:1 ratio to the wall. (That is, for every 4 feet high, pull the ladder feet away from the wall 1 foot.)

When accessing a roof, the ladder should be at least three feet (3 rungs) taller than the roof and tied or clamped to secure it.