

# Bull incident

I had been reassigned to the Escalon location in July of 2007. It was during the busiest time of the mosquito season, definitely not a time to learn a new region.

There would be a new supervisor to work with, a new crew with a click I would have to gain acceptance with, terrain and surroundings unfamiliar to me, along with a whole new breed of mosquito and pesticides that were foreign as well.

I was given no training to accomplish my duties. The majority of my time was spent learning the proper method of entering and exiting properties. I was responsible for the control of mosquito infestation and virus in zone 18 arguably the most labor intensive zones.

The day was September 17, 2007. I entered the property to treat the 10-acre pasture, which belonged to the Farnelli family. The time was 12:45 p.m, it was my first pesticide application after lunch.

Driving access was not offered so I had to hand treat the 1.25 acreage of irrigated runoff with a granule hand application instead of the much preferred option denied me-the ability of spraying from the comfort of my air conditioned vehicle while using my blower. What could have been a 15-minute job was now an hour worth of manual labor.

I had already encountered some arguably dangerous experiences prior to this date, but nothing prepared me for what I endured on that day.

I had inspected the source towards the end of the previous day, recorded my findings, and made my plan of attack. When I did my inspection there were no cows on the property. What changed in a 24-hour period could have resulted in my demise.

Dairy bulls are not safe to be around. They are responsible for more than half of the farm worker fatalities. Many deaths are a result of farm workers being attacked, mauled, rammed, gored, trampled or pinned against some surface.

I am unclear if old Farnelli released the mammals while I was making my treatment, or if the creatures were hiding in the shade, grazing in their troughs or were not visible. What became clear to me, after only twenty minutes of spreading my chemical, was a big black and white mass of something blocking the access where I would need to pass to get off the property.

I started to walk towards it and quickly realized it was a massive and angry bull. Apparently mating season had begun and I apposed a threat to this male against the fifty something females he had a prior date with.

The bull became to see me as a direct threat. We were head-on and with his head lowered, shoulders hunched, and neck curved toward me-his point of aggression. He pawed the ground with his forefeet, sending dirt flying over his back, and his horns rubbed the ground.

I do not remember a time in my life where I was more afraid. I had my two-way radio on my person but any one I called would be an hour away. I slowly walked to the end of the fence line, as far from the bull as I could physically be.

I started to assess my options. There were three ways off the property. The first option I tried required me to jump across a three-foot wide ditch. Once I got across, now with wet feet, I was puzzled as to how I would get through the Italian Cypress trees that were grown so close together I couldn't fit between them even if I made it through the wasps' nests whom had made the trees their homes. After jumping back over the ditch where I started from I reassessed the back of the fence line again.

I had counted that option out before because I am terribly afraid of the electrical current the farmer uses to prevent the animals from escaping.

Less than a month earlier I had grabbed a barbed wire fence, to pull apart and climb through. I hadn't noticed the thin wire lying against the top wire. As I grabbed both wires an electrical current jolted through my whole body, clear into my teeth. I did not want to experience that again.

Even if I made it through the fence with minor electrical current shock, the reality was there was another twenty-acre parcel with no signs of life and it was not practical.

Anger took over my fear. After what seemed like hours but in reality had been about fifteen minutes, I decided I was going to walk straight towards the bull and if I made it past him, back to my truck.

I had my radio on me and if I was attacked *figured* I could at that point radio in for an ambulance. The strangest thing happened as I started marching towards this thousand pound beast. One of the females that had been grazing on the other side of the pasture had gone over to the bull and started to talk to him and nudge him. I don't know if she could smell my fear or I may not have even been a factor at all. All I do know is slowly the bull let down his stance turned and followed the female back over to the other side of the pasture where they had come from.

I slowly and humbly walked back to the safety of my work truck, which sat on the other side of where the bull had been blocking and the gate I had to walk through.

That day when I returned to the yard my supervisor asked me how my day went.

After I told him my story he laughed at me.

The act of my supervisor laughing at my life endangering experience and at me provoked more anger than the bull scenario itself.