

Hiking Among Cows: How to Stay Safe

Cows are an important part of our alpine landscape and, like other grazing animals, contribute to the maintenance of the meadows. You will often encounter them on alpine pastures in the summer, and in the valley along hiking trails during spring and autumn. Incidents are rare and are usually caused by human behavior. Here are the rules of conduct that are important for a safe experience:

Always maintain a sufficient distance.

Do not attempt to feed the cows/animals.

Be respectful. Noise and hectic movements can startle the cows/animals.

Be cautious around calves. Mother cows protect their offspring and may view an approach as a threat. Maintain your distance from young animals and, above all, avoid encounters between mother cows and dogs.

Pay attention to warning signs. If a herd becomes restless, special caution is required. Stay calm and walk away from the cows quickly without turning your back to the animals.

Stay calm. Should cows approach you, remain calm. Do not turn your back to the animals and try to avoid them as much as possible.

Watch your dog. Always keep it on a short leash. If a cow is about to attack, unleash it IMMEDIATELY.

Respect the fences. If there is a gate, use it and close it afterwards. Make sure to cross the pasture quickly.

Do not leave the hiking trails on alpine pastures and meadows.

Pro-Tips:

- **If a herd blocks your path,** it is better to take a detour and walk around the herd in a wide arc.
- **Dogs must always be kept on a leash.** You should especially avoid encounters between mother cows and dogs, as the mother animal might view your dog as a threat.
- **You should know these warning signs:** Lowering of the head, as well as pawing the ground or screaming.

Did You Know?

In Austria alone, there are around 8,000 managed alpine pastures and meadows. Cows and other grazing animals are an important part of our alpine landscape and contribute to the maintenance of the meadows. **Without them, the alpine meadows would quickly become overgrown.**

