

Introduction to Low-Stress Cattle Handling

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GOALS OF LOW-STRESS CATTLE HANDLING.

- 1) The handler not getting hurt.
- 2) The Cattle not getting excited or hurt.
- 3) After a training session, the Cattle are calmer and more responsive to you than they were when you started. They learn to move away from you and toward you in a relaxed manner.

I . CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT THE FACILITIES.

1. Are the pens high and strong enough for the cattle you are about to work?

- Breaking out can start bad habits.
- If you must use inadequate facilities, be particularly careful about the amount of pressure you are putting on the animals.

2. Is the footing in the pen stable?

- Solid footing is necessary for calm handling.
- Slipping tends to panic cattle.

3. Are you crowding too many cattle into the pen?

- Bumping causes panic,
- Overcrowding makes it harder to move in and out of their flight zone.

4. Are there Major Distractions to Calm Handling?

1. Outside the Pens: Are there attractive or frightening things going on?
Be aware of these conditions and use them in you training.

2. Inside the Pens: Clear out any obstacles to smooth movement [Even out pens for better circular motion; use a gate or panel to round out corners].

Make sure there is enough space so that you can easily move in and out of their flight zone. This is the point where optimal training goes on.

II AIDS: VOICE, STICK, FLAG, OR LARIAT.

Threshold Use: Cattle must learn to yield to your energy and body position right from the beginning. All aids must be “earned,” once you master the basic body language.

III COMPOSING A GROUP:

Pen sizes vary but 5-10 animals work well together.

Grouping cattle by flighty/dull is extremely helpful in teaching.

1. Flighty, Wild / Silly; large flight zone cattle.

Work from outside the pen\ cautious pressure to avoid flight or attack. Sometimes individual work is called for. In this case, a small pen and a long pole with a flag are used.

2. Dull/ little to no flight zone. [hand-raised/ pets].

Very Firm pressure is often needed at first to achieve yielding.

3. Average range cattle: Cautious to Evasive; [15-20 foot flight zone in the pen].

Major initial tasks: Getting cattle to yield their feet to you (i.e., move away from your pressure, without panicking. They must also learn to respect a “bubble” area around you that they will not enter without your permission.

In each session, you need to teach cattle to move away and to draw to you in a calm manner.

My experience with Brahman and Brahman influenced cattle has been that this can be accomplished reasonably well with twenty or so yearlings in four to six training session.

IV SITUATIONS THAT REQUIRE SPECIAL CAUTION.

Pen work can have its “testy” moments.

Remember:

1. There is a wild animal in every tame one, and a tame animal in every wild one.
2. You must take responsibility for what happens in the pens.

You set up the situation and you are responsible for reading it correctly. The cattle will respond to your presence in a way that seems to them necessary for their survival.

Examples of Dangerous Situations:

1. Working with isolated, cornered, or injured cattle.
2. Cattle in the process of ranking each other.
3. A mother with a young calf.
4. Bulls focused on mating.
5. Cattle in close proximity to feed.
6. Cattle in an overcrowded situation.
7. In General: Anytime cattle are “right brained,” that is, angry, threatened, or excited.