

Low Stress Cattle Handling



Outline

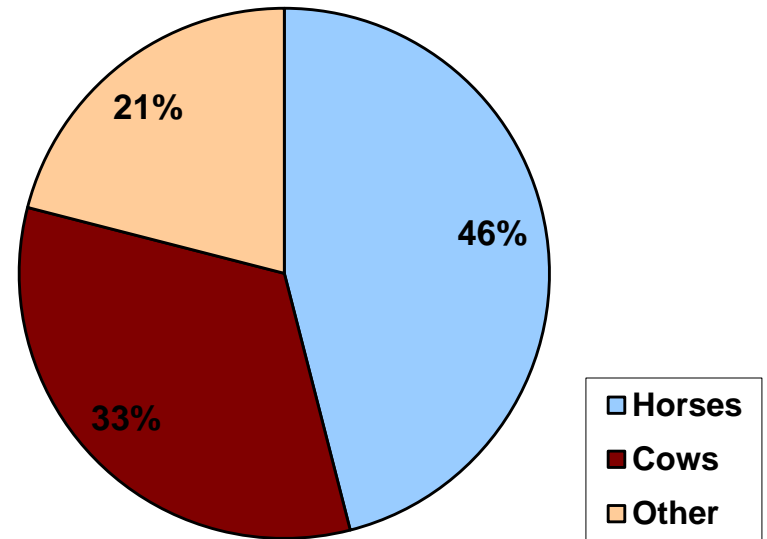
- Background
- Animal science research
- Understanding cattle behaviour
- Moving cattle
- Special hazards
- A word about bulls
- Livestock facilities
- Conclusion



Background

- ▶ Livestock related deaths and injuries are a major problem.
- ▶ 20% of all farm injuries serious enough to need hospitalization are livestock related.
- ▶ ___ Canadians died in work-related livestock incidents between 1990 and 2000.

Hospitalized Livestock Injuries



Animal Science Research

- Dr. Temple Grandin, an animal science researcher at Colorado State University, developed low stress livestock handling theory in the 1980's.



- Alberta rancher Bud Williams turned theory into practice and became the world's leading cattle handling expert in the 1990's.
- Today, many trainers, offer classes in low stress livestock handling.

Animal Science Research

- ▶ Dr. Temple Grandin also showed that low stress cattle handling improves productivity.
 - Faster weight gain
 - More milk in dairy cows
 - Less disease and injury



Understanding cattle behaviour

Sensory characteristics

Sight:

- Poor depth perception:
Cattle need time to adjust to changes in lighting, flooring etc.
- Blind spot and kick zone

Hearing:

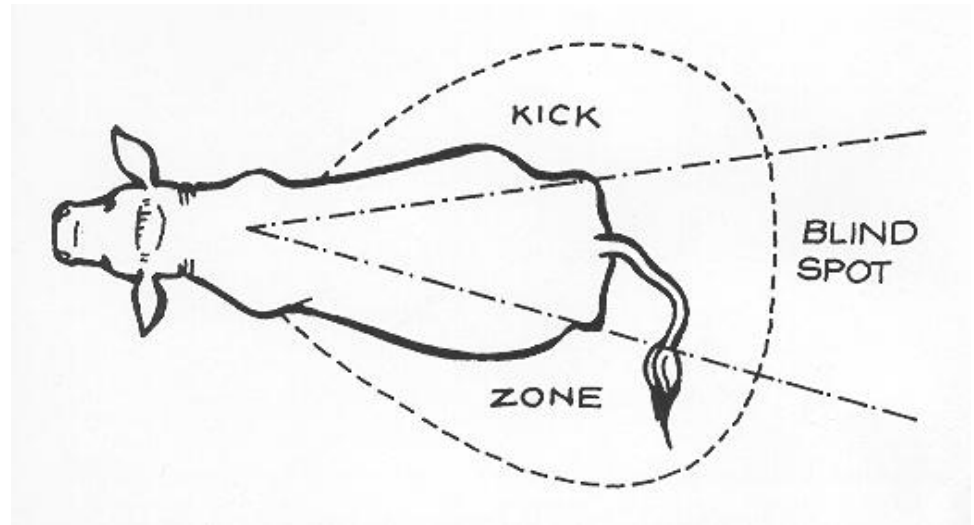
- Sensitive hearing:
Cattle are agitated by shouting, barking dogs and any sudden noise.



Understanding cattle behaviour

Blind spot and kick zone

- All grazing animals have wide-angle vision but can't see behind themselves.
- Nature's way of protecting the blind spot is for the animal to kick into that space.



Understanding cattle behaviour

Temperament

- Animal personality = genetics + life experience.
 - Forehead whorl can help identify temperament.
 - Proper handling and selective culling create a manageable herd.
- Signs of aggression include:
 - Quick, erratic movements
 - Raised, flicking tail
 - Pawing the ground
 - Turning sideways
 - Raised ears
 - Snorting



Understanding cattle behaviour

Instincts:

- Herding instinct
- Follow the leader instinct
- Maternal instinct
- Territorial instinct
- Habitual instinct:
“enjoy routine”



Understanding cattle behaviour

Flight zone

- Corresponds to the animal's personal space.
- To locate edge of flight zone, approach animal and note when it starts to move away in opposite direction.
- Deep invasion causes fear and agitation.
- Size of flight zone diminishes with frequent, gentle handling.



Understanding cattle behaviour

Point of balance

- Is at the animal's shoulder or chest area.
- Cow will move in the opposite direction to the direction the handler is moving as the handler passes the cow's point of balance.



Moving cattle

General rules:

- Work with another person.
- Avoid quick movements and loud noises.
- Respect the size of the animal.
- Plan an escape route.
- Avoid leading cattle into an enclosed area (eg: truck) without an escape route.
- Don't wrap or tie a lead rope to yourself.
- Remove distractions before moving cattle.



Moving cattle

More general rules:

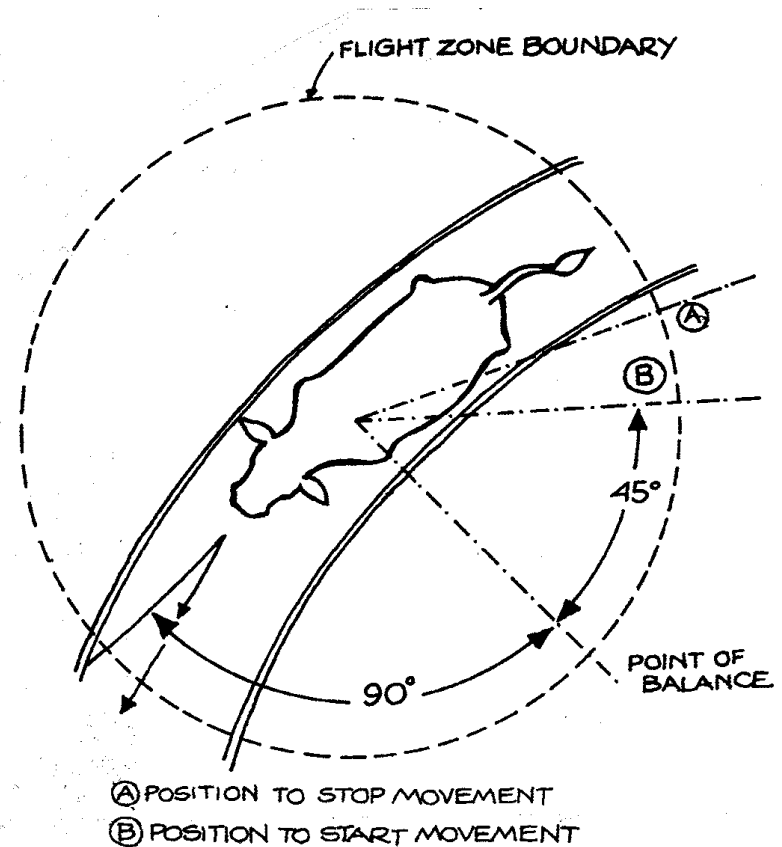
- Stand beside a gate, not behind it.
- Avoid electric prods and physical force. A stick with bells or plastic ribbons alerts cattle where you are.
- Dress appropriately:
 - Leather gloves
 - Steel-toed boots with metatarsal guards
 - Rubber gloves if animal is ill or injured



Moving cattle

To initiate movement:

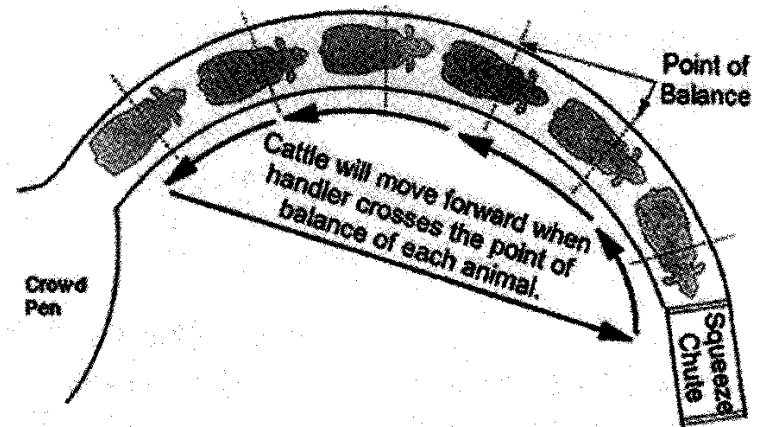
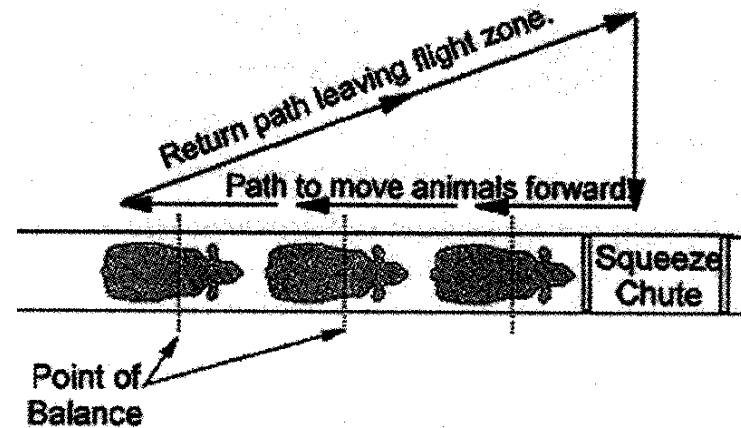
- Apply gentle pressure at the edge of the flight zone
- Do not continue to pressure the animal once it is moving away from you.
- Don't push an animal to move if it has no place to go.



Moving cattle

▶ To get an animal to move forward (or backward):

- Walk past the animal in the direction opposite to the direction you want the animal to move.
- As you cross the animal's point of balance, it will begin moving forward (or backward).



Moving a herd

👉 To drive a herd:

- Pace or ride back and forth behind the group at a 90° angle to the direction you want it to move.
- Keep this up as the cattle move forward.



Special hazards

➤ Separation from the herd

- May cause anxiety and unpredictable behaviour

➤ New situations

- May cause anxiety and unpredictable behaviour.
- Cattle form a lasting impression of painful or frightening events - may result in future handling problems.

➤ Illness or injury

- May cause unpredictable behaviour.
- Kick toward injured side.

➤ Calving

- Cows can be aggressive when protecting their young.



Conclusion

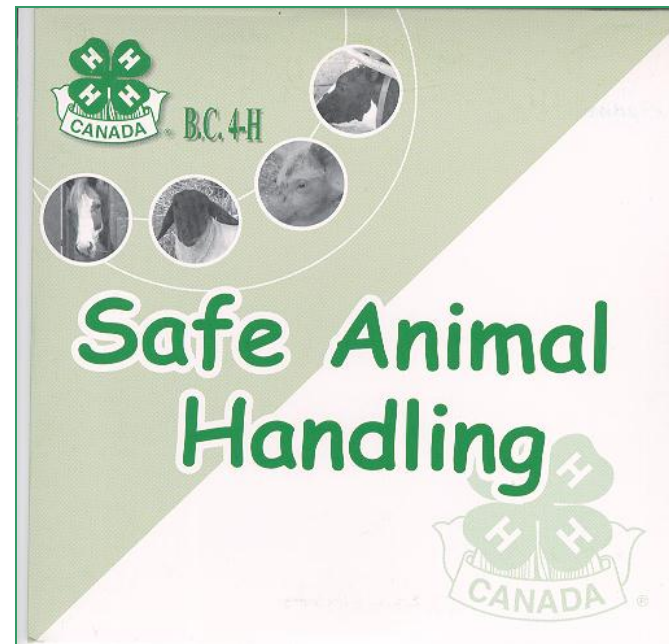
Low stress cattle handling is:

- Safe
- Enjoyable
- Productive
- Humane



Other Resources

- ▶ I.ARE.H "Low Stress Cattle Handling" video
- ▶ "Livestock Handling Safety" press kit from Canadian Federation of Agriculture
- ▶ Safe Animal Handling CD-ROM, available from B.C.4-H
- ▶ "Leading the Way" video, available from MB 4-H.
- ▶ NAGCAT Guidelines "Animal Care" Best Practices Booklet



Program Partners

- ▣ Institute of Agricultural Rural and Environmental Health (I.ARE.H)
 - University of Saskatchewan
- ▣ Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- ▣ Canadian Agricultural Safety Association



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