Cattle Handling Options for Heifers

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February 25, 2009

Considerations

- How does your current cattle handling facility work?
- How convenient are supplies, water, and electricity?
- How well do cattle move through your facility?
- Are your animals comfortable?
- Are you comfortable?
- Is your veterinarian/breeder comfortable?

Do you need to make changes?

- My animals are getting injured.
- My animals are frightened when I handle them.
- Cattle are balking at equipment and people.
- I/Veterinarian are uncomfortable.
- My work takes too much time!

Cattle Behavior

- My animals are getting injured.
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How cattle see

- Cattle can see 300° around them.
- Where can't they see you?
- That's why we get kicked!

Limited Vision

- Cattle have poor depth perception and only 60° vertical vision (humans have 140°) and must lower their heads to focus on something on the floor.
- Shadows, bright areas, foreign objects, and moving parts tend to catch cattle's attention and disrupt animal flow.
Curiosity and Cattle Flow

Flight Zones & Handling
- Heifers have much larger flight zones than cows and tend to become agitated quickly.
- Back out of an animal's flight zone to calm her down.
- If/When she turns to face you, you are out of her flight zone.

Cattle Stress
- Stressed cattle are hard on equipment, and run the risk of harming themselves and you.
- Stressed cattle have lowered immunity, digestive functions, and fertility.
- Cattle have 8 times more sensitive hearing than people, but have a hard time deciphering where the sound is coming from.
- Calm, quiet handling benefits everyone.

Stress Scoring
1. No stress animal has moved to another area on her own accord. No pressure has been applied.
2. When pressure is applied animals move in a natural slow gait.
3. When pressure is applied animals raise their heads and move in a straight determined manner but do not break out of a walk.
Stress Scoring

4. When pressure is applied cattle move at a faster gait and raise tail and perk ears forward/up.

5. When pressure is applied cattle move at a fast gait. Feet slip when turning, or at thresholds. Tail is raised and head is lowered.

Handling Facilities

- Can you work with existing facilities?
- Sturdy and safe
- Take advantage of natural cattle behavior
- Accessibility
- Convenience
- Cost

Sturdy and Safe

- Poorly constructed equipment is not safe for you or your animals.
- Well constructed equipment requires less maintenance.
- Well constructed equipment works better and saves you time.
Facilities Options

- Headlocks
- Palpation rail
- Squeeze chute/self-locking head gate
- Combination of more than one option

**HEADLOCKS**

- Sturdy and safe? YES
- Take advantage of natural cattle behavior? YES
- Accessibility to animal? YES/NO
- Convenient? YES
- Cost? YES/NO

**Palpation Rail**

- Sturdy and safe? NO
- Take advantage of natural cattle behavior? YES
- Accessibility to animal? YES
- Convenient? YES
- Cost? YES

**Self-locking Head Gate/Squeeze Chute**

- Sturdy and safe? YES
- Take advantage of natural cattle behavior? YES/NO
- Accessibility to animal? YES
- Convenient? YES/NO
- Cost? YES/NO

**Combination Option**

- Sturdy and safe? YES/NO
- Take advantage of natural cattle behavior? NO
- Accessibility to animal? YES
- Convenient? YES/NO
- Cost? YES

**Options for your farm...**

- Takes preplanning
- Takes advantage of natural cattle behavior
- Low cost

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- Works well with large groups of animals
- Takes advantage of natural cattle behavior
- Restrains animal very well
- Can be moved indoor and outdoor setup
- High cost

- Convenient to water, supplies, and electricity
- Can care for special needs animals
- Takes preplanning
- Does not take advantage of natural cattle behavior

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- Low cost
- Not convenient to utilities
- Difficult to reach animal
- Not sturdy corralling equipment

- Medium cost
- Good accessibility to animal and supplies
- Takes advantage of natural cattle behavior
- Utilizes existing facilities
- Sturdy and safe
• Uses recycled materials/low cost
• Very sturdy and safe for animals
• Low cost
• Takes advantage of natural cattle behavior
• Exposed to weather
• May not be convenient to utilities

Is this convenient for you, your cattle, or your breeder/vet?

Contributors

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Questions?