

# Animal Behavior and Restraint:

## Cattle

Animal health emergencies involving cattle will require the handling and possibly restraint of the animals. Having a basic understanding of cattle behavior results in more effective efforts, minimizes stress on the animals, and reduces the risk of injury to responders.

### Cattle Characteristics

- Cattle are grazers and browsers by nature, and have a strong herd instinct. Individuals that are isolated from the rest of the herd become anxious. They have a natural curiosity, but may be excited and frightened by new persons in their midst. Cattle have keen hearing and vision and can see 310° around their bodies.
- Cattle are gregarious and have a strong herd instinct. When other cattle are seen, they will seek their company. For this reason, individual animals become anxious in situations that lead to isolation from the herd. An agitated or excited lone animal can be very dangerous and may charge at people or injure itself trying to rejoin the herd.

### Cattle Handling

When handling cattle, most injuries occur because of a lack of understanding of cattle behavior. People often make the mistake of chasing cattle, which results in agitated, stressed cattle. This makes the situation dangerous for both humans and animals. Sometimes the best course of action is to sit and wait. Cattle become dangerous when isolated from the herd, or when they are protecting their calves.

- Avoid: Abuse, loud noises, yelling, isolating animals and distractions.
- Use slow, deliberate movements.

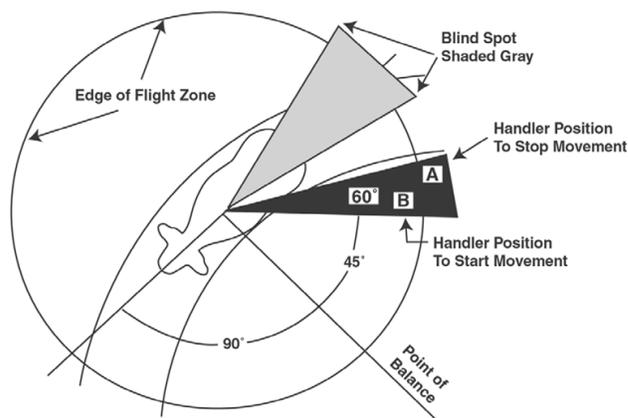
### Flight Zone

An understanding of an animal's flight zone makes handling much easier. The size of an individual's flight zone is determined by their tameness and their level of excitement or stress. Most cattle have a flight zone.

- The blind spot behind the animal (light gray), this area should be avoided.
- To make an animal move forward, the handler should enter the edge of the flight zone behind the

"point of balance" or shoulder.

- It is best to work at a 45-60° angle behind the animal's shoulder, moving back and forth parallel to the direction you would like the animal to move in. The ideal location for the handler is between positions A and B on the edge of the flight zone.
- Move toward B to start the movement.
- Move to A to stop the animal's movement.
- If a handler walks deep into the flight zone, cattle will have a tendency to move in a direction opposite of the handler's movement (e.g. an animal will usually move forward if the handler moves from the head toward the rear).
- To make an animal move backwards, the handler must move in front of the point of balance.
- Sudden, deep invasion of the flight zone may cause the animal to panic.



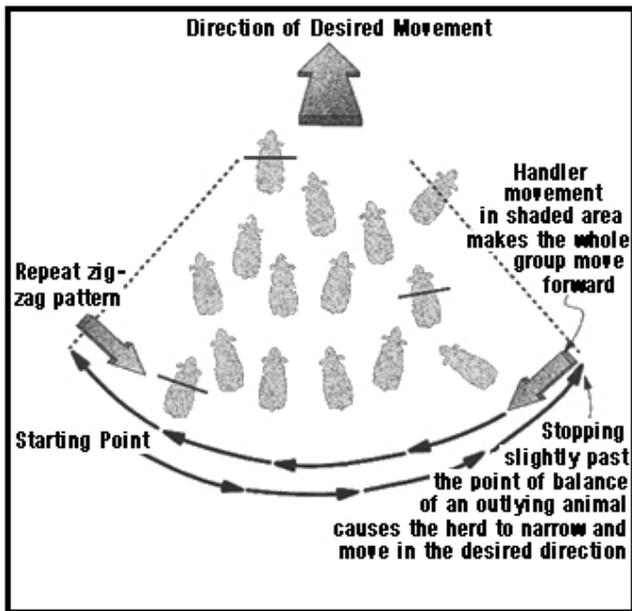
### Collective Flight Zone

Moving a herd of cattle can be done by using the "collective" flight zone.

- Get cattle into a loose bunch by making wide back and forth movements on the edge of the herd in a straight or very slight arc (like a giant windshield wiper). The movement should not exceed a quarter circle.
- Take your time and ignore any stragglers – they will be attracted to the herd by herd instinct and will rejoin the group.
- Once the majority of animals are together, increase pressure on the collective flight zone to initiate

movement. Alternately penetrate and withdraw from the flight zone to get the desired movement.

- Animal movement should occur at a slow but steady pace. Running indicates panic and will lead to unpredictability in the animal's behavior.



## Methods of Restraint

The method of restraint of cattle will depend on available resources, the number of handlers present, and the behavior or agitation level of the cattle.

- **Cattle Chute with Head Restraint** – This is the most desirable restraint device. With a cattle chute, diagnosis and treatment is much easier and safer.
- **Lariat and Halter** – This is a common form of restraint, but dependent upon having something to which the animal can be secured.
- **Tranquilization/Sedation** – The use of drugs should be used in extreme or emergency cases only.

## Things to Avoid to Prevent Injury

- **Separating cow-calf pairs** – Mother cows can get extremely agitated and aggressive while attempting to protect her young. Handlers could get injured if they come between a calf and its mother.
- **Sudden movements in a cow's blind spot** – This can cause the animal to either panic and run away, possibly causing injury to the cow, or to kick, possibly injuring the handler.
- **Cornering isolated animals** – Cattle become extremely nervous when separated from the herd.

Cornering or posing a threat will only increase the stress on the animal. The potential exists for injury to both handler and animal.

- **Abuse, loud noises, noisy machinery** – These can all startle cattle and may cause panic either in individual animals or throughout the herd.
- **Distractions while trying to move cattle** – Things like patches of light and dark, rattling chains, or flapping clothing will cause cattle to balk or stop moving. If a handler attempts to force the animals past the distraction, they will get increasingly stressed and may injure themselves or the handler.
- **Wire fencing** – A stressed, excited, or frightened cow may run through wire fencing, inflicting injury upon itself.

## Additional Resources

- Recommended Basic Livestock Handling: Safety Tips for Workers. *Temple Grandin, PhD*  
<http://www.grandin.com/behaviour/principles/principles.html>
- Low Stress Methods for Moving and Herding Cattle on Pastures, Paddocks, and Large Feedlot Pens, by Temple Grandin  
<http://www.grandin.com/B.Williams.html>
- Understanding Livestock Behavior  
*The Ohio State University Extension*  
[http://nasdonline.org/static\\_content/documents/1704/d001709.pdf](http://nasdonline.org/static_content/documents/1704/d001709.pdf)
- Cattle Handling and Working Facilities.  
*The Ohio State University Extension*  
<http://ohioline.osu.edu/b906/>
- Cattle Handling Safety in Working Facilities.  
*Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service*  
<http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-4821/BAE-1738web.pdf>

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