

Stockmanship

**A powerful tool for
grazing lands management**



by Steve Cote



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Stockmanship

A powerful tool for grazing lands management

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Steve Cote

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Preface

This is a book about a remarkable method of handling cattle on the range, written for the benefit of the range rider.

It doesn't explain a new method. It's about one that may be quite old but was developed and perfected in modern times by Bud Williams. Bud teaches a remarkable method that he calls low stress livestock handling.

Low stress handling has implications for livestock health that is perhaps more powerful than the advent of modern veterinary medicine. It reduces stress, which can promote sickness and poor productivity in livestock. It also produces astounding control—control that is far beyond what most ranchers believe cattle herds will do.

On the range, we can set it up so cattle want to do what we want, with amazing results:

- * Even large herds become easy to drive and stay mothered up the whole way, down hills, through gates, into new pastures.
- * Herds of cattle will stay where you put them for days. They will leave the herd in the uplands, go to drink at the creek, and return promptly to the uplands and the herd.
- * Calves can be weaned in an open field, placed in a pen or pasture, and be on feed and water in very little time—less bawling, loss of weight, or sickness after.
- * The herd instinct can be rapidly rekindled, so where you find one cow, you'll find them all.
- * Well handled, whole herds become calm, eliminating bunch quitters, fence jumpers, riparian loafers, and cattle that want to leave the range early.

This has been my experience. It doesn't take a lot of skill to do it fairly well, just some knowledge and dedication.

The traits of cattle, Bud Williams' techniques and tips on handling cattle on the range are contained in this book. I've included information in this book on how cattle learn, their essential handling traits, the basic techniques, and some range handling tips. These are the foundation of good stockmanship, no matter what type of livestock operation you run. They reveal the key to outstanding control, flexibility, and success using the powerful tool of grazing.

I have taken the liberty of applying horsemanship principles to handling cattle. Although working cattle and training horses are certainly different, the principles about how they learn and basically react to human handling are not. I've also been very fortunate to have learned and experienced some key principles from a master horseman about how horses think and learn. I believe these principles are the basis for changing all livestock from wild to calm. They provide the foundation for using all the techniques and solving handling difficulties.

I found these principles not only helpful, but necessary, when I was green to this and the idea of handling cattle like Bud teaches. In fact, working cattle to do anything well was a foreign idea. In those times, I fell back on some principles of horsemanship. It helped me, as it has a number of riders since.

This remarkable method of handling cattle is the best and perhaps only practical solution to solving one of the most pressing and difficult range management problems in the West: Protecting and enhancing riparian and other critical areas.

Controlling the time range and riparian vegetation are exposed to grazing is the crucial element to avoid overgrazing. Time can readily be controlled using Bud's method, because cattle will want to be in a herd, can be moved readily, and placed so they stay in uplands or wherever desired.

About seven years ago, range conservationists Lloyd Bradshaw of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Chance Gowan with the Forest Service, myself and other team members decided to combine holistic management and planned grazing with this method of handling cattle to solve pressing riparian concerns on an allotment.

On this allotment, in fact on most allotments, riders didn't have good enough control to meet riparian range standards consistently. No amount of riding using traditional methods produced the control needed. Riders wore out horses, ran weight off cattle, lost cattle and even killed a few. They got a lot of sick ones and lost an average of 40 head per season to larkspur poisoning. It took many riders 30 days of hard riding just to gather and bring them off the allotment. Ranchers in grazing associations inevitably faced administrative action by managing agencies after the grazing season was over. Ranchers with larger private grazing lands face similar difficulty in achieving the control needed to successfully implement planned grazing.

After years of effort and some remarkable successes, we have come to the conclusion that this method of stockmanship is probably the most powerful range management tool ever developed. Each year, every allotment and private range we visit only strengthens this conclusion.

Conservationists from the Forest Service, Center for Holistic Management, Natural Resources Conservation Service, University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System, Idaho State Department of Agriculture, Society for Range Management, the National Riparian Service Team, grazing associations, and many others concluded long ago that high control over cattle is essential in protecting and enhancing critical range resources.

I have three reasons for writing this book. The first is that this extraordinary livestock handling method has never been documented in writing in any detail. It is important to record at least some of the facts and details about Bud's method so the information won't be lost and forgotten, as has already happened at least once in history.

The second reason is to produce a valuable reference and a guide for those who already have some training in stockmanship. There is much to remember from a Bud Williams school and few people who can help guide you afterward. This book, in fact, started out as documentation of the important points of what I had learned from his schools, through private visits, and questions over the phone.

The third and last reason is to help others gain confidence and success rapidly by including handling experiences from the viewpoint of a beginner. I want to do whatever I can to help this method become **the way** cattle and all livestock are handled in the near future.

Times are especially hard for the entire livestock industry, but especially so for ranchers using public lands in the West. Many more good riders are needed to help ranchers protect and enhance the range to the level they desire. Stockmanship knowledge is essential for ranchers to achieve success and some measure of prosperity.

Successful prospering ranches and healthy grazing lands are important to our Nation. But desertification, the opposite of healthy range, is occurring on a large scale on the seasonal rainfall areas of the United States. Indeed, it is a worldwide menace that has thwarted scientists and consumed enormous amounts of time and money.

Today it is understood that well managed and well handled herds of grazing animals play an essential role in preventing and reversing desertification. In the past, we haven't had the knowledge to control our animals without stringing up fences all over our public lands and larger tracts of private grazing lands. Fences do nothing to improve livestock health and productivity.

I've been around animals long enough to realize that the value of a method has a direct correlation to its true origin. Bud's method comes right from the animals, portraying how they need to be handled in order for us to get them to do things calmly and effectively, with minimal stress on them, us, and our horses. That's why it works on all cattle with normal brains.

Unfortunately, it doesn't mesh so well with the way the modern cowboy brain works, because it isn't how most of us want to work cattle. This is the only hard part to doing it—giving up how we want to do it and doing it the way the cattle need to have it done. But it is well worth the trouble to learn.

This book isn't a treatise on the depth of knowledge or experience of Bud Williams or his expertise. It includes a few of my experiences with the method and the way I think about it. It has worked delightfully well for me on the range—well beyond all claims. It became indispensable to me from early on. Please don't interpret any of it as the way Bud would necessarily do it, describe it, or teach about it.

Animal behaviorists, animal science students, feedlot operators, veterinarians and dairy farmers depend on good handling for optimum livestock health and productivity. For the range rider and ranch manager, optimum land health depends on sound resource planning and a high level of stockmanship.

So, study this book. Learn from it, and believe it. Then go out with some confidence and use it. Don't return to old habits. Traditional methods of handling create highly stressed cattle and a lack of control. Where the method fails is when you don't do it. Listen closely—the low stress livestock handling method works well on *every* animal, no exceptions.

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chapter one

Stockmanship and range health

Some years ago while working with a grazing association on an allotment here in central Idaho, I realized how crucial it is to integrate a high level of stockmanship with range management.

The allotment was about 140,000 acres of rolling hills and mountains with plenty of timber, thick brush, and low precipitation—most of which came in winter as snow. Many of the creeks contained endangered or threatened fish species.

For the grazing association, meeting stubble height standards—designed to protect or enhance habitat for these fish—was the crux of staying out on the range.

When I arrived on the scene, the grazing association—whose families had managed stock there for over 100 years—was about to lose it all. “Battle” with federal land management agencies was imminent.

The ranchers were backed up as far as they would go. They were facing a big cut in stock numbers and a closed allotment. Year after year, they couldn’t meet grazing standards along the creeks in spite of enormous riding efforts. They also had to deal with some anti-grazing bias.

To gain needed support and new ideas, the association formed a collaborative team of people who all had an interest in the allotment.

The team adopted holistic decision making, formulated a goal, and developed a grazing management plan that called for control of over-grazing and over-resting. This meant managing the time that plants and streambanks were exposed to grazing animals and allowing adequate recovery periods for plants and soils.



Livestock grazing and healthy riparian areas are compatible.

Stockmanship and range health

The team concluded the range concerns were not a result of too many animals in spite of prior recommended cuts in stock numbers. In fact, many more cattle could be supported on this range while still enhancing the resources.

The real key to meeting standards lay in controlling the time that animals were in any one area, especially in riparian areas. This had to be done without new fencing due to a lack of funds and some valid concerns about aesthetics, wildlife, and recreation impacts. This meant controlling the animals with riding alone.

Having tried for years to get better control over the stock with almost constant riding and re-riding the creek bottoms, they were going to have to uncover something new.

The team found a potential answer in the form of a Bud Williams low stress stockmanship school.

Some of the association members attended a session. When they returned, they rather hurriedly hired a rider and had me help train him so the livestock would stay together and be controlled enough to follow the range plan. This meant keeping the stock mostly in the uplands and moving the whole herd effectively when the time came.

A month or so later, the bulk of the herd was together on the range, staying where they were supposed to be and where they were settled. The entire herd was moved on time and according to plan. Riparian areas were lightly used, and streambanks were stable.

Uplands on the pastures, each thousands of acres in size, looked as if they had been evenly trimmed. Plenty of required stubble remained.

The association found the stock so calm and easy to handle that it was hard to believe they were the same cattle they had turned out. Team members (some former bitter adversaries) were working together.

By August, the association had saved about \$10,000 in labor (riding) costs. Ranchers kept full numbers—1500 pairs, bulls and horses—and stock stayed out all season that year.

End-of-the year monitoring showed the cattlemen had met all the required stubble height standards on the forest except for two, which were missed by only one-fourth inch. The year before they had missed all of them—by a lot.

Four years later, they were still on the range in full numbers and full seasons. The average exposure of plants to grazing on any particular area had been reduced from 45 to 14 days. Riparian area trend was so good that it was a regular topic at ecological restoration symposiums, conferences, and workshops. It was written about in magazine articles. Managing agencies gave the cattlemen national recognition.

I have been on allotments in many parts of the West—visiting, observing riding, and teaching stockmanship. The scenario is similar almost everywhere.

Traditional handling methods create high labor costs, stress on the riders and stock, and lost productivity. Association members and their riders work hard each season, only to fail to meet standards in the end. In the winter, they receive show cause letters and argue with managing agencies over cuts in livestock numbers or shortened grazing seasons.

In marked contrast, when riders were found who could handle the stock well and implement planned grazing systems, labor costs were lower and standards were met and exceeded. In some places, stock numbers were increased and seasons extended.

I am convinced that no matter how well thought out (holistic) a range plan is or how collaborative the effort, grazing associations will not achieve satisfactory range conditions and livestock productivity without dedicated riders who are skilled in stockmanship.

The need for productivity

As a soil and range conservationist, two facts have forever changed the way I looked at livestock handling and range management.

Fact one

There is now incontrovertible evidence that long term rest creates rangeland desertification, much the same as does severe, repeated overgrazing. Even today, most scientists are unable to solve desertification. This loss of biological diversity, including the productivity and health of plants, soils and other natural resources in seasonal rainfall environment is the cause of much strife worldwide. Often blamed on poverty, lack of education, lack of technical advisors, insufficient conservation programs and too many grazing animals, addressing these items still consistently fails to achieve good results. In the western US, we have slashed livestock numbers over the past 80 years, and we have, comparatively, good extension services, a higher standard of living, lots of technical advisors and cost share programs, but the problem continues.

The solution lies in restoring the presence and creation of the effects of active, concentrated herds of large grazing animals. The time that plants and soils are exposed to grazing animals and the effects of herds on ecosystem processes is the key to halting desertification. On most pas-

tures and ranges, overgrazing of plants and over-resting of plants and soils is occurring simultaneously. On USDA and USDI enclosures and on hundreds of thousands of acres of open range that has been long rested, the range is almost dead. However, where we have concentrated herds of heavy grazing animals, where the time of exposure of plants and soils to animals and the proportion of grazed plants is well managed, we see remarkable contrast. Where herds are excited (properly turned) and the hoof disturbance that enhances diversity is created, the range is flourishing.

Without herds of well managed animals, our range will rapidly desertify; in fact it already has. But this can, on most ranges, be prevented and be reversed.

Fact two

In order to control the time and create herd effects on large expanses of unfenced grazing lands, we need to be able to control our animals at a much higher level than is occurring. Although even mediocre grazing management can be better for the range than long term rest, because it keeps perennial grasses alive, traditional handling falls short of producing the control required to even meet minimum government range standards consistently or profitably. Enhancing the range on a large scale is well beyond the reach of most grazing associations due to a lack of control over livestock. For many years, however, the knowledge of how to control our animals, without enmeshing the land with fences, has been hidden.

This is the case no longer.

Under sound (holistic) management with animals that are well handled, the effects of grazing on the health of rangelands can be outstanding—well beyond the realm of what was formerly considered possible. The results that planned grazing can achieve cannot be duplicated by rest, fire or technology.

Stockmanship and range health

For the person running stock on public land who is dedicated and willing enough to step ahead and relieve a little, the value of true stockmanship can mean the difference between getting kicked off the range or showing astounding results. For our rural communities, stockmanship can be an important tool to increase watershed health and boost rural economies. It is a rare tool, being one that increases livestock profitably and range health at no extra cost.

Range plan basics

A key concept behind the Natural Resources Conservation Service range conservation planning guidelines is to control the **time** that plants, soils, and other resources are exposed to grazing animals.

A successful range plan is based on a sound goal and is adequately monitored. The plan usually prescribes that a relatively high proportion of plants will be grazed at a moderate level of use. This often means achieving grazing on areas that aren't usually grazed and reducing the time that other areas are exposed to grazing animals.

The rationale for moderate level of use (percent utilization) is so cover and litter amounts will be adequate to protect soils, favor the water cycle, and meet needs for other herbivores.

Additional needs of wildlife can be incorporated into the plan by adjusting livestock movements to avoid unnecessary disturbance of critical areas during crucial periods.

Highly controlled livestock can be used to reduce brush, keep forage productive, create more plant diversity and reduce fires—all of which create better conditions for many wildlife species.

Planning in the Arco, Idaho, NRCS field office calls for the herd to periodically move over the land en masse to get a jump start on enhancing nutrient and mineral cycles, convert sunlight to plant material, and develop the biological community.

This can be done by turning large herds rather sharply so hooves land where they may.

Done correctly, this action breaks up soil crusts, creates ideal seedling germination conditions, moves old standing dead vegetation onto the soil surface, controls sagebrush, and firms up loose soils that favor too many brush or tap rooted plants.

This helps create upland watershed conditions that favor water infiltration, which can result in lower peak discharges. It also helps protect streambanks from excessive erosion and promotes willows and other important riparian vegetation.

Controlling the length of time livestock use riparian areas can result in further enhancement of stream conditions by favoring populations of bank-holding shrubs and sedges.

Simply having animals on the land in low densities and numbers does not result in dramatic advances to the key processes that drive range ecosystems towards higher diversity and health.

The absence of concentrated herds of large herbivores on seasonal rainfall environments produces, unquestionably, serious loss of biodiversity due to poor functioning of these processes.

We can't keep perennial grasses (the mainstay of our range vegetation) and our soils (the foundation of all life on the range) healthy or biologically diverse and thriving without large numbers of hefty grazing animals.

We also need the knowledge and ability to handle stock to enhance these processes.

For a full explanation of these and other phenomena, see the Appendix, as well as Allan Savory and Jody Butterfield, *Holistic Management: A New Framework for Decision Making* (Island Press, 1999).

Healthy riparian areas and grazing are compatible when the stock are under good control. Riparian grazing by large herds of hoofed animals is certainly natural, even here in the Intermountain West.

Diaries written by trappers and soldiers reveal that large herds of bison grazed central Idaho until the middle and late 1800s. Vast herds grazed much of the Plains and the Southwest. Fossil records show that mammoths, rhinos, horses, and many other herbivores were present with the bison long ago.

Grazing can and does have many beneficial effects in riparian areas if it is done properly. But if stock stay too long or return too soon, significant bank trampling and changes in vegetation communities and water quality can occur.

Long ago, it is likely that pack hunting predators, grizzlies, and perhaps Native Americans—combined with the self-moving characteristics inherent within large herds—helped control the length of time these animals loafed around on any one place like a riparian area. The impacts were probably high, but the duration probably short. Soils and plants recovered and were positively affected.

Over-rest can also create desertification. Over-grazing and over-resting are occurring at the same time on most ranges. Both must be controlled to meet range standards.

Even though much of our upland range condition may rate good or excellent by conventional standards, the lack of concentrated or excited herds (turned hard to create herd effect) is causing our range to stay well below its natural potential.

Although official definitions of overgrazing do not appear in range literature, people assume too many animals cause it. But too many cattle, elk, bison, sheep or horses don't cause overgrazing.

The time plants are exposed to animals, not how many animals graze the area, is what determines if an area is overgrazed.

Overgrazing occurs when animals return to graze already **severely grazed plants** within the same growing period and prior to adequate recovery of carbohydrate reserves.

The key is to move the herd before the grazed plants send up enough growth to entice an animal to graze it again.

This sounds simple enough until we consider that on most ranges, cattle are scattered over +/-10,000 acres of range with few or no cross fences. Many of the cattle don't want riders to find them, and they don't want to be in a herd. They want to stay in their favorite hideouts.

We understand why cattle do this, in spite of it being unnatural and non-beneficial to them. We also know how to prevent and correct these problems.

To avoid over-grazing and over-resting, riders must know how to handle even large herds so they want to stay together, graze where they are placed, and can be readily moved to a new grazing area.

Well-handled livestock will go places that were formerly impossible to get them to. Their tendency for hiding out in favorite places will be changed.

Stockmanship and range health

To avoid and correct the partial rest (lack of herd effect) conditions prevalent on Western ranges, riders must learn to turn large herds to achieve herd effect.

Meet Bud Williams

Two extraordinary people—Bud Williams and his wife Eunice—have lived their lives working with animals and achieved incredible results. Entirely on their own, they developed a method of livestock handling called “low stress livestock handling” or “Bud Williams’ Stockmanship.”

Stockmanship developed from Bud’s search for a way of handling livestock that reduced their stress. Along the way, he discovered that low stress livestock handling also resulted in high control.

Bud has traveled around the world for over 40 years working all kinds of livestock—from buffalo and elk to reindeer, horses, sheep and cattle—to enhance his knowledge and methods.

Bud developed this method from scratch. His only guide—the stories he had been told about riders in the past who could do some rather remarkable things with stock.

The missing part of the story was exactly how they did it. Bud had the intelligence, persistence, and perception to figure it out.

Today, people who have seen what he can do never forget it.

His search for a method to reduce the stress of handling also enables riders to achieve astounding control, even with large herds on rough range, even through complex grazing plan rotations, even with Brahma and longhorn cattle, and even while riding old gentle horses.

The method Bud developed has wonderful implications for any livestock producer. It can increase profits without additional cost, because it doesn’t cost a nickel to handle stock with more understanding.

I first became aware of low stress livestock handling when Bud did a stockmanship clinic here in Idaho. A rancher called and said she knew what we were trying to do with our cattle and that we should go, that it would help. That clinic—and the day after—was a turning point for me as a conservationist who has had a life-long interest in training animals.

At the clinic, Bud stated right up front that you could place livestock right where you want them. They would be there the next day and even longer simply by handling them properly on the way there. Cows could even leave the herd, go to drink, and return to the herd right after.

He showed us over and over that day that he could consistently achieve control. Control that just the day before I knew was impossible.

This was a tool many Idaho ranchers needed badly. I set out to learn it, because I figured what I could do, they could too.

My first try

My first attempt at placing a herd using what I had learned was with my neighbor’s cattle. I had helped him work the stock many times before the old way. But I had firmly decided I was going to work stock Bud’s way from now on.

There were about 200 cattle in the herd, mostly cows and a few yearlings. They were well scattered over about 120 acres of pasture that I could view from my home. This meant I could conveniently watch what happened after I placed them.

I tried to gather them by going back and forth behind groups, but many of them just took off for the far end. So I worked individual animals as I could. When they got a little calmer, I gathered them loosely in a far corner.

As I approached the herd, I saw two or three cows (the ringleaders of the ones that had taken off) with heads up and bugged-out eyeballs looking at me. Before they took off (when their heads went from me to looking ahead), I backed off. I repeated this maybe eight or ten times.

When I could get within about 30 yards of them, I went back and forth in straight lines. These sensitive cows marched off, and the rest followed. They went pretty fast, so I let them get off a ways, then just followed straight behind and slower than they were going.

They ended up at a bridge over a canal. Some cows crossed, but others stopped and looked back at me. So I stopped. They relaxed in a few seconds, and I went up the side towards the front of the herd to near the bridge and pressured them into their sides. They all went straight ahead and across the bridge. I drove the herd just as easy as I could by walking straight lines behind. I drove them for about 30 minutes more to the other end of the field and back.

The herd began to slow, so I zigzagged behind and pressured a few real slow ones directly onto their sides. By now, I could work pretty close to most of the herd. But about five or six in front were getting pretty far out from the rest.

I drove them a little while longer, and they looked pretty relaxed. They were just walking, and nobody seemed too concerned. They were all moving straight and at a comfortable walk.

I went up the sides, and they all slowed and stopped as I went by except for a few in the lead. They actually sped up a little. I cut in straight

across behind them and let them go ahead. They soon drifted and stopped.

I went back and forth across the front of the main herd and turned the front animals so they were facing the back. I went around them and got a few of them facing different directions by pressuring their heads or hips to turn, doing so very carefully. About a fourth of them bedded down in a few minutes. The rest went to grazing calmly.

I left them on a part of the pasture that had very little feed left. I stayed about 15 minutes more to see if any of them were thinking of leaving. Then I left and went home. It was about 9 AM.

I could see the herd well from my house. At noontime they were all still right there. Not a cow had moved. Some of them left the herd to go to the creek. They drank and returned to the herd right away.

Cattle left the herd in small bunches throughout the afternoon to drink, but they all went back to the main bunch, even though they crossed some-pretty good feed on the way.

The owner showed up about 5 PM with two riders and some dogs. He opened a gate about 30 yards from the bunch, and they all got behind the herd and started yelling. None of them moved. He got the dogs on them, and some cows spun around and jumped. But still the herd wouldn't move away. They obviously wanted to stay right there.

They kept up harder pressure for about 15 minutes. Finally the herd went forward and eventually through the gate to new pasture.

I'm sure the owner wondered why it was so hard to get 200 cows to go 30 yards to a gate. I never did tell him why.

Since then, I've spent countless hours working and studying herds and helping others with this method. I have had essential and very patient help along the way from Bud and Eunice.

During my work and vacation time, I've gone from ranch to ranch and worked many types and breeds of livestock in many different settings. I've been able to solve every handling problem encountered.

I've put cattle herds together—even some difficult herds—and placed them consistently in many settings. I can do work by myself that used to take three or four riders, because I've learned to handle the stock to work well for me **first**. The day is always productive and the job done right.

Over the years, I've had cattle do some incredible things for me. Some people tell me I'm lucky to get them to do what they do. Maybe so. But my luck changed the day after attending a Bud Williams school.

It works on the range

Over the past few years, riders trained in good stockmanship—beginners really—have been able to achieve control over cattle herds on some Idaho allotments to a degree formerly thought impossible.

A former head of the Society for Range Management toured an allotment here in central Idaho with a team of livestock producers and agricultural officers from overseas. He spoke to the rider I had trained and viewed the riparian areas after grazing. He called this method of stockmanship “the most powerful range management tool ever developed.” I fully agree.

With dedicated riders who have just some skill in stockmanship, associations can meet standards and even exceed them. Ranchers and grazing associations faced with severe reductions in live-

stock numbers, shortened seasons, or even allotment closures have been able to sustain animal numbers and length of grazing seasons because they can—and are—meeting these standards.

Standards in parts of Idaho call for leaving a 4- to 6-inch stubble height in riparian areas. Uplands have utilization standards that are usually set at about half of the season's growth on bunch grasses. In general, all streams in the allotment must also be in good condition or have an upward trend.

Around here, ranchers have found that with good stockmanship, more forage is available to the stock, because they can get and keep them up high or move them into more difficult to access upland places. Everywhere that stock graze according to plan, more forage is being produced and the stock are in better condition.

The Pass Creek Grazing Association in Mackay, Idaho, had two low stress handlers who were able to put stock where others had long ago given up trying. They changed out the typical pattern of grazing the creeks and lower range, then moving the stock to the next fenced area. Now, they place the stock up higher, using much of the upland feed and reducing pressure on the bottoms.

Ranchers in Arizona report they have quit building fences to protect the creeks. They don't have to because they are handling stock so much better.

Officers in Australian agricultural agencies report outstanding results from ranchers and riders who adopted Bud Williams' method on the range. They send people here to see it work and learn more.

Ranchers around Arco, Idaho, are realizing both timesavings and healthier herds since adopting low stress handling.

Low stress will work for you

I've discovered that most, if not all, livestock behavior problems are due to handling that doesn't fit the animals. It isn't the breed of stock or bad luck. Used consistently, low stress handling produces profound and lasting changes in the behavior and health of all livestock.

Good stockmanship applies to many facets of production: Handling in facilities, trailer loading, doctoring, weaning, calving, breeding, showing, and more. These are items for another book.

The crisis on the range needs resolution. Herders need skills that allow them to handle a herd so it wants to stay as one herd, stay where they put them, and be easy to gather and move.

Riders should understand how to solve common range problems such as getting a herd up or down steep mountain trails, crossing creeks, rivers and bridges. Going through gates. Sorting and placing stock.

These topics are covered in this book in enough detail that it can serve as a reference guide for the serious rider.

The chapters on stress, control, and how livestock think is essential information for every livestock handler and producer.

Good news...and a challenge

The good news is that the knowledge of how to make better resource management decisions already exists. The framework has been developed, and the grazing management fundamentals for the rider are well documented by Allan Savory of New Mexico. Some NRCS and Forest Service range conservationists have a great deal of technical knowledge on grazing science and management principles.

Having a supple, light, stock horse is essential to range riders practicing good stockmanship.

The knowledge of achieving calmness, lightness and remarkable obedience in a stock horse has existed for many years. Men like Ed Techick of Arco, Idaho, are carrying on the method of the great Charles O. Williamson. His method also contains facts that are crucial to understanding and handling all hooved animals.

Powerful, proven knowledge is now available to anyone who wants it for drastically improving the range, producing great stock horses, and achieving stunning control over livestock. You can improve the land like you want and have healthy cattle, because the stock will do everything you want and the cattle will get everything they want.

The challenge with all of this is:

You aren't going to get to do it the way you want!

Reducing stress and getting outstanding control of your animals requires that you give up reacting to your instincts and respond totally to what the animals show you they need and on their timetable. This is with animals that don't reason and in ever-changing circumstances.

Stockmanship and range health

The rider who is knowledgeable and dedicated to stockmanship operates very differently than an engineer. This is why formulas, grazing systems, pat answers to animal handling problems, stubble heights, government grazing rules and policies, administrative actions, and environmental group ideas have met with quite limited success.

Conflict and contention is mounting over the results of grazing on public and even private lands. Good animal handlers are in high demand and much needed.

It is my hope that riders will strive to improve their stockmanship after understanding how important it is to range health and their quality of life.

When they understand how livestock learn, think, and react to handling, they will have powerful knowledge to apply pressure correctly and control even large herds of cattle quite readily, given time and experience. Resource-management implications of proper handling are enormous on **all** livestock operations.

A pool of skilled, dedicated riders is crucial for the survival of many ranchers who graze stock on public lands.

chapter two

Stress

Cattle are very sensitive to how they are handled. Even an hour of rough handling can produce long-term stress and negatively effect their health and productivity.

Modern medicines can't compensate for how badly we handle our animals.

Stress occurs when we place demands on animals that they can't calmly meet or respond to naturally, and failure to meet our demands has undesirable consequences. When stock are stressed, they operate on their instinct for self-preservation. There is no room for this if you want real control—in fact, it's counterproductive to control.

Stress differs from pressure. Well-handled cattle can take a tremendous amount of pressure and stay calm and responsive. But if we apply pressure in a way they don't understand or can't calmly control, they get very stressed very quickly.

Panic follows too much stress, which often results in injuries. Vets tell us to keep stress to a minimum to avoid disease with livestock.

Look at it from the stock's view

Livestock only do what we prompt them to do. They operate on what they read in us—which way we move, how fast or aggressive. This is all they have to go on.

Few of us understand the difficulties livestock face with traditional, high-stress handling and why it produces such seemingly rotten behavior in them.

For some insight, let's take a common situation on the range that I've seen hundreds of times and look at it from the cow's point of view, based on some known traits.

An association rider who is striving to get more days from a grazing unit and meet riparian standards is under considerable pressure to keep the stock off riparian areas. He rides the riparian areas and moves any stock off the creek into the uplands.

While checking an area, he finds a cow bedded down with a few others near the water. He had just cleaned this creek, but here they were right back.

Cattle need to see what is pressuring them, and they can't see things directly behind them. But this rider doesn't know that. He comes right in at the cow from directly behind, so she jumps up and turns so she can see him. He comes right at her head-on (where she can't see him well either), so she spins and heads off at a trot away from him. Then she turns back in towards the willows to hide.

The rider jumps out and blocks to turn her back and shouts. She turns away from the willows and trots off. The rider trots up right behind her. So she runs off. Then he sics the dog on her for good measure to keep her going up the mountain.

He gathers the other cattle and drives them hard up the mountain, so it takes awhile for the cow to find her calf. She was pushed, then crowded and jammed during the drive up.

That afternoon the rider checks the creek, and she is right back where he found her before. Same spot exactly. Now the battle is on! Well, in some places this goes on all summer long.

Why would cattle do this?

This rider doesn't understand the importance to the cow of **how** she is handled. He could solve the riparian loafing problem by understanding the cause of the problem and how the cow must be handled.

The cow is seeking comfort and security. She associates it with both the place and the situation where she last experienced it.

The rider's horses are no different in this respect.

The cow needs to see what is pressuring her, wants to walk at a comfortable pace without being jammed and crowded, and go in the direction she is facing. She becomes fearful with loud noise and fast movements and desperately wants to know what we want and to get along with us.

This is also true of the horses this rider uses to bust the cows off the creek.

In returning to the creek, she is just being a cow. She went back to the place where she was comfortable **before** the rider stressed her. She was taught, due to the rider's lack of knowledge, that getting up off her bed is rushed and uncomfortable.

He also taught her that "if you walk you get pressured, if you turn you get spun around, if you speed up you get pressured, if you slow down you still get pressured."

Every place she was driven she got unrelenting pressure or noise from someone she couldn't see. She was bumped and crowded by other animals when driven and lost her calf.

The herd got stopped on the uplands, and she left the first chance she got to return to the spot where she last experienced some freedom from stress.

The explanation is simple to the rider, "She did it because her mother was a Saler from Wyoming."

To the cow, it was a matter of survival, self-preservation, and relief from force and trouble. She was just doing what she thought she should, finding safety, comfort, and freedom from stress where she had found it once before.

We just don't see it their way. Some riders don't want to go to the effort. But learning how stock think so you can get high control isn't that difficult and is well worth the effort.

How many times have we shoved cattle across a bridge or crossing from a place in the back and lost when they broke back?

We should have had those cattle working calmly and responsively before trying to cross the bridge or go through the gate. And then, perhaps, we should have been at the front where they **could see us and** where we wanted them to go.

But that just doesn't fit us very well, so we don't want to do it that way. We want to get behind and scare them the right way and right now.

This kind of handling doesn't fit the animals, so they get thoughts of their own and ideas about taking over and saving themselves. They run away, lose weight, get sick, and stop eating. We lose control, time, and money.

To prevent stock from returning and loafing on the creek, or to get cattle over the bridge, into the trailer, etc., we need to gain an understanding of their natural instinct of self-preservation in order to gain their confidence and trust.

Then we can set it up right by using the right techniques, watching and adapting to be where the stock need us to be so our ideas can become theirs. When we do, the stock get calmer and calmer, and then real control comes. It just happens. The cattle are able and willing to do what we want.

It is our misunderstanding of the importance to animals of how they are handled that causes their fear and lack of confidence that we can so readily gain, given some knowledge.

What stress produces

Three cows died of exhaustion last fall in one local gather. They kept running away because riders stressed them out in the first place and then kept chasing them.

If they had just quit chasing them, they would have quit running away. But three cows died, and many more made sick. Today these riders are still chasing cows (other people's cows).

Many riders seriously overwork their horses each year trying to control riparian loafing animals and others that quit the herd. Some riders use six or eight saddle horses apiece. Even so, these horses commonly lose hundreds of pounds or just give out. Some die.

On one ranch, three cows had to be put down due to broken backs from rearing in the chute. More were injured seriously going over the chute wall and through fences. One calf was crushed. Many more were bruised or injured.

A few signs of past stressful handling (and stressed stock) include:

- * Range stock that are found far away from the main herd, hiding in their favorite places
- * Mother cows that leave their calves when pressured by the handler
- * Cattle that take side trails when driven or run ahead of the herd
- * Groups of cattle that wander all over a new pasture
- * Bawling and milling of calves around the pen
- * Stock that persist in hanging around a riparian area

Stress

- * Cattle trying to fight the handler
- * Stock that are afraid to go past the handler
- * Sick animals

None of this has to happen. Good handling can correct all of these behaviors and conditions. All you need to do is learn a little about how cattle needed to be handled.

Your horses won't need to be worked so hard either, because the cattle will work easily for you. They will be comfortable where you put them and go where you take them. Comfortable cattle don't push fences, either.

A number of scientific studies and trials show that it really does matter how livestock are handled. Handling can be the key to improving animal performance and reducing disease, especially in the U.S. and other countries where nutritional requirements are generally at or close to an animal's genetic potential to gain.

Studies in the Western U.S. show an increase in milk production in dairy cattle with lower-stress handling. One study showed an increase of 6,000 pounds of milk per day (\$1,200) just from switching to low-stress handling.

In England, piglets handled with lower stress increased their rate of gain by seven percent. Other studies show an increase in farrowing rates of almost 19 percent.

In Hawaii, studies on heifers showed that shrink (loss of weight from not eating and increased metabolism) is proportional to the level of stress in handling.

Moderate handling stress can cause shrinkage in excess of six percent, and light stress about four percent. Average daily gain after handling trials was affected by the level of handling stress for at least 44 days. The unstressed animals gained 25 pounds, lightly stressed gained 20 pounds, and the moderately stressed gained 16 pounds.

A number of studies and personal communications with dairy and feedlot managers shows that changes in either the handler or the handler's **attitude** can dramatically affect livestock production and performance. Even a mood change in the same handler on dairies, going through the same routine, can affect milk production from one to three percent.

The National Cattlemen's Association sponsored a study called the National Beef Quality Audit that showed for every animal marketed, one dollar was lost due to bruises. Five percent of beef carcasses are dark cutters. Proposals for addressing this range from injecting the carcasses with chemicals or salt to gene splicing and cloning.

Drugs, fancy facilities, or supplements are attempts to correct symptoms. Good handling addresses the root of behavior problems.

Stress is a major contributor to livestock health problems and to the difficulty we have in controlling stock. We cause most of this stress through high-stress handling methods. Stress has an effect on both livestock behavior and health.

Maximizing herd health and control means using good stockmanship principles, techniques, and cattle knowledge. This means using a little feel and timing to accommodate the nature of livestock in everything we do. Livestock will then turn remarkable control over to us. Most of the sickness and behavior problems will disappear.

Perhaps the most satisfying aspect of good stockmanship is the sense of accomplishment that comes with working **for** the animals, not from beating them at the game. You can clearly understand why a handling or sickness problem is happening and address the root cause of it instead of correcting just the symptoms.

Know that you can get any animal to handle well if you persist. I have yet to see an exception to this.

Long ago, cowboys drove stock from Texas to Kansas under very difficult conditions without losing control. Although little has ever been written about **how** they were handled, enough stories and sketches exist that lead me to believe handling methods were very different.

Stories are told about men who used to gather wild stock, put them in a canyon, go get another 200 head half-a-day's ride away, and return to the canyon to find the stock still there. These cowboys understood a few things about cattle, or the ones in the canyon would have been long gone when they came back.

Stock will clearly show you some of the effects your handling is having on them. When handling stock, you should be looking for their behavior to change and problems to disappear. How drastic a change depends on what your herd is like to start with and how effective you are.

We need to stop relying on better facilities, tougher dogs, faster horses, or gimmicks to control stock. All we will ever need is knowledge about what stresses stock and some skill in handling that fits the animals.

chapter three

Benefits of stockmanship

good livestock handling is an indispensable tool, and with it comes some amazing benefits. Stock handled right will really work for you, and you'll get a lot of satisfaction from the quality of work you've done.

The benefits

- Prevent livestock from leaving the range and going home before you want them to. This will help you take advantage of a full season of grazing without a battle.
- Stock will stay together as a herd and stay where you put them.
- The proportion of upland forage grazed versus riparian areas grazed can be reversed from the typical grubbing out of creek bottoms and over-rest of uplands.
- Drive cattle herds easily. They will line out, stay together, and react solely to direction from the rider.
- Stock will readily go uphill or downhill, across creeks and bridges, be driven and placed in what used to be "impossible" places.
- You can sort out sale animals or sick animals from a herd and load them easily without stressing them or other stock.
- Reduce fencing chores and expense, as stock can be kept together, placed, and moved in larger pasture or range rotation systems without fences.
- Avoid spending time and money on tubs, fancy corrals, and hot shot batteries. Fancy and expensive systems that really only cater to our bad handling habits won't be needed to get the job done right.
- De-stress stock that someone else buzzed up. Take the stress off animals in far less time than it would take by just leaving them alone. This eliminates the time they go off feed, weight loss, and potential sickness.
- Wean calves easily on the range without building fancy corrals (or any corrals). This allows you to run dry cows only, easing use on the creeks during critical periods and facilitating use of high elevation forages.
- Graze key places to reduce fire hazards.

Benefits of stockmanship

- Achieve higher conception rates if you breed on the range because the bulls will be with the herd, not brushed up during the heat and fly season.
- Decrease fly problems. You can stay ahead of the fly hatches in manure by moving the whole herd ahead of the hatch.
- High-strung and low-condition stock will gain better and get healthier.
- Increased gains on weaned calves because you can get them on feed and water soon after weaning. Mother cows will stay calm during and after weaning so you can wean across a fence without fence damage.
- Decrease diseases like pink eye, pneumonia, scours, and even dystocia. Overall herd health can improve dramatically.
- Get along better with your wife or husband when working stock (this was no small deal at my place).

The future of public lands grazing in the West very likely depends on ranchers adopting a more management-intensive approach with positive results, doing it profitably, and doing it soon.

The risk—breaking old habits

People have a host of reasons for not committing to stockmanship.

Many ranchers have a tendency to hang on to traditions and practices. The way they handle livestock is perhaps the hardest to change.

Some don't believe the control that can be achieved and just dismiss it.

Some believe it, but say they can't do it.

Some say it's too much to learn and too much trouble, so decide they don't need it.

True stockmanship is very different from traditional livestock handling, so it's an affront to some people, almost like saying that most of the things you've been doing with your stock all your life have been wrong. This can be hard to accept.

Perhaps the most common obstacle is that you realize stockmanship means you won't get to handle the stock like you want. You'll have to fight some old habits and really pay attention to what animals require.

Still, I believe that almost any one who really wants to—and spends the time—can do it well. Wanting to is extremely necessary, because you have to persist at working with yourself to change.

No matter how long you've been around livestock or what you think about handling strategies or facilities, I can tell you that **we are the cause** of livestock handling problems. The problems are caused by not understanding how cattle need to be handled and/or how much handling can stress cattle and what it costs.

Cattle are easy to control. Your beliefs and attitude are the only real obstacle to doing it well.

The basic handling techniques aren't hard to do. The traits of cattle and handling principles aren't hard to remember.

It's hard for some people to see how sensitive stock are to how they are handled. Accommodating their sensitivity in every facet of handling is a challenge in the beginning because the inclination is to think you're letting them get the upper hand—spoiling them, perhaps.

For all these reasons, many people stop learning and trying, even though the benefits are almost endless and the drawbacks few.

Recognizing and using what is familiar about cattle for you already will be helpful.

Many of you have seen cattle return to the exact spot on the riparian area where they were just removed.

You've seen that going up the sides of a herd slows them—and that going down the sides speeds them up.

Pay attention to what happens when your partner rides right up the sides of a herd. Watch when he pressures stock from directly behind or head on, or when he shoves stock.

Watch what happens when riders get out of line behind the herd and where the herd turns. This will help you become more sure that what you do determines what the stock do.

The essence of low stress handling is the experience of being the absolute master of a herd and knowing how readily they will turn over control to you. Once felt, the old way will lose its appeal.

chapter four

Basics of high control

Few riders like spooky animals, and nobody wants sick ones.

Spooky animals usually have a sensitive disposition and have experienced aggressive handlers.

Sick animals are stressed because they have experienced being forced or shoved, slowed and then speeded up, jammed and yelled at.

Stockmanship is based on an understanding of what creates anxiety, fear, mistrust, and panic in cattle as well as what creates calmness and predictable responsiveness.

Understanding the value of avoiding stress and creating calm, responsive stock is fundamental to learning and continuing the practice of stockmanship.

Good stockmanship has its foundation in the principles of how cattle learn, how they respond to certain movements or techniques, and the importance of certain traits and nuances that must be respected when handling them.

You must learn the principles before you use the techniques so you won't be teaching stock bad habits and can keep the right things happening.

When you know the traits of cattle that must be accommodated, you can be in the right place to get control and set up the right environment so they can do what you desire.

You can't get high control using only good techniques. Good techniques applied the wrong way or with a counterproductive attitude (force) can cause more stress than before.

Chapter Five on behavioral traits of cattle explains the basics of how cattle learn, how they can become calm, and why they get wild. Chapter Eight on techniques shows how to prompt cattle to move the way you desire. Chapters Nine and Ten present tips for solving common problems that riders encounter.

When you put all these pieces of information together, you'll know why cattle do the things they do. You'll have the ability to correct handling problems and prevent them from happening.

Three basics to better control

Good stockmanship is rather simple. It involves believing and adopting three main things:

1. Use handling techniques or signals that livestock can respond to naturally so they can understand your meaning.
2. Stop forcing stock to do what you want. Instead, let them do it by setting it up so they **want** to do it. Replace force with sound handling principles (how stock learn) and the use of livestock traits that make it easier for the cattle to do what you want.
3. Stop doing the things that bother livestock like yelling, curving around them, crowding, jamming, and moving fast so they will be comfortable enough to learn quickly and react calmly.

Steps to change

Simple as stockmanship sounds, it takes time to understand. For some, it takes even longer to break old habits. Some people say, “I tried that low stress stockmanship thing one time, and it didn’t work.” The first time they tried to walk, they likely fell on their faces.

To drive a herd well, place cattle and sort easily, you have to get control over yourself and your horse, gain knowledge, and perfect your timing. Experience is knowledge, so this takes time.

It’s important to understand that getting control over livestock doesn’t happen right away. People seem to go through a process in changing themselves and the cattle.

I’ve identified a few levels of change that I’ve seen some people go through as they learn. As they get better control over themselves and gain more dedication, their animals change more and more.

There is little point to identifying stages except to understand there is both outer and inner changes in riders.

Outer change, such as using good techniques and quitting the yelling and racing around, will yield some improvement but **you have yet to learn to recognize the importance of some little things that mean a lot to the stock, so things go wrong that you might not expect.**

Inner change, which is real dedication to working cattle well, is based 100 percent on how the animals need to be handled, combined with experience and perfect timing to transform them.

One:

Just starting out—outer level of change

A rider heads out to work his herd after learning some things about stockmanship.

A few hundred dry cows are in a meadow. He’s decided to give this method a try and not holler or wave his arms to move them. He decides that today he will gather and drive them to a new pasture and settle them there. He will try a few techniques that he’s learned, like going back and forth in straight lines, try turning the herd, and stopping them to see if it works.

This is a start in the right direction, but he has made at least three common, but major, mistakes so far.

He approaches the animals that are scattered and separated from the group head on. As he gets closer, some heads go up, so he pressures them into their sides. As he does, a few jump away and spin around to look at him.

He switches to riding back and forth across them. A few start to drift towards the main group, but a few sensitive animals trot away, headed towards the end of the big pasture. He gallops off and escorts them back into the bunch.

He's just made another batch of three mistakes.

He remembers instruction regarding approaching and backing off when their heads go up and not approaching sensitive stock straight on. So he re-arranges his approach in handling the other animals on the outer edges of the bunch. He approaches them at a flat angle (not head on) and stops farther out from them when they get nervous, advancing only when they calm down.

When he's close enough, he just stands quietly for a moment and lets them turn and head towards the group. He lets them relieve the pressure by moving off, without shoving, more than he's used to. He sees how stopping when they get nervous and advancing when they are calm works to calm animals. These things all help, and he can see it works better.

He is still almost guaranteed to have some problems with the cattle the way things are now. But this is a start.

Obvious mistakes made so far:

1. The rider simply decided to give this method a "try" to see if it worked like its claimed. **Every rider must first believe that it works and decide to fully commit to it before expecting good results.**
2. He started out having decided he would drive the cattle to a new pasture and settle them. **No rider should pre-determine what to do when first working stock to handle better. Approach, watch, and see how the cattle need to be worked, based on their reaction to what you do.**
3. He wanted to try some techniques to see if they worked. **Every rider should start using only the techniques listed in this book and do so with absolute surety that they do work when applied according to the instructions.**
4. He approached the scattered animals directly, head on. **This makes it hard for the stock to see him, so the sensitive cattle took off.**
5. He ignored the meaning of the stock jumping away and spinning around. **These stock need more basic handling to get them to experience that pressure has a release, that he isn't aggressive, and won't do things that bother them.**
6. He should not have galloped off to escort the few cattle that trotted off back to the main bunch. **Running and forcing stock back heightens their anxiety and stress.**

Now the herd has come together and starts moving together. But pretty quick, 10 or 15 of the lead cattle take off from the bunch. He gallops ahead and gets them. He returns them directly back to the herd. They stay in the middle of the bunch, and the drive continues. Pretty soon some wander off again and start taking side trails. He trots out and brings them back in. This happens 5 or 10 times along the way.

Basics of high control

The rider made a few repeat mistakes here that will show up, especially when he stops the herd.

He will come to understand that **stock can't be chased and forced back into the herd**. This appears to work as they hide out in the middle. But they will leave the bunch when they get a chance.

The handler rides up the sides of the herd to slow and stop them. He stays around an hour or so, returning little bunches that keep leaving the herd.

Stock that keep leaving the herd because they are thinking someplace else is more secure, won't stay. They need more and/or better handling before expecting them to stay. Stock won't stay, or drive well, or sort well, etc., unless they want to.

The rider leaves for the ranch. The next day most of the herd is back to where he first picked them up the day before. He has to gather and move them again. He calls me to get some advice on what to do.

Two: Using techniques the right way, with some handling sense and tips

After getting more advice, the rider heads out to work the cattle that came back (didn't stay). He approaches the bunch at a flat angle (not head on), edging closer, watching the stock all the time.

As he approaches, a head comes up, so he backs off a minute until she goes back to grazing again. Then he gets closer. Another head goes up, and he backs off. He continues to go back and forth behind the herd, walking in long, fairly straight lines, edging closer and closer until the herd moves off.

He's trying not to bunch them too early this time, just work them until they are calm so they want to come together more. He drifts the herd along a short ways, and a cow in the lead trots off. About 12 others go with her.

The rider leaves the herd and goes with these bunch quitters for awhile, following just behind. When they slow and stop, he does too. He waits a few minutes, then carefully starts them moving. But they trot off. He follows. This happens a couple of times more before he can get them to turn back to the herd.

When they rejoin the bunch (are all together and stopped moving), the rider gets away and waits about three minutes, just letting them be together. Then he works straight lines back and forth, and the herd moves off nicely.

Then the lead cows start curving off to the left, so he goes straight out wide to the left until they straighten out. This happens a few more times until they drive straight and all together. He goes up the sides to slow them, and the lead part of the herd takes off running through a fence and into the next pasture.

He has quite a wreck getting them back through the gate and spends till nightfall fixing the fence. He calls for advice.

Three: Getting the cattle to working first, in an easy place

The next time, the rider gathers the whole herd and puts them in a large corral. He starts working the animals in the corral, pressuring into the sides of any and all that are near him until they respond calmly to it.

He lets them get bunched to the other end of the corral, opposite to where he brought them in. He lets them drift back, with him in the middle, so

they all have to go by him. A few have to scamper by, so he repeats the process and they are all calm about it.

He lets them out of the corral while he stands at the gate so they have to go by him. Some trot past, so he follows them until they slow and turn back into the others.

He puts them all in the corral again and lets them out the gate. All do it calmly this time.

So he gets some other riders, and they take the herd out of the corral onto the range. A few cows start to get too far ahead of the herd, so one rider goes up and follows them and works them until they are calmer and can be easily turned back in.

When all the animals are together, the riders wait a few minutes and let the herd be together. Then they go back and forth in a line and drift the herd a mile or so.

Then they start driving them at a comfortable pace for the cows. After about an hour, they all stay together and move together, no bumping or crowding.

The riders back off pressure and the herd slows and drifts into where they want them to settle and stay. They back off away from the herd and watch. Fifteen minutes later a few start drifting away, grazing and walking, grazing and walking. They pressure these stock ahead away from the bunch, letting them pick the pace. They turn back to the herd and stay quietly.

The riders leave for the day. Success! The next day, every animal is right where it was left the day before.

They approach the herd again, taking much time to get the stock up and prepare them for a drive up the mountain trail to a new grazing area.

Things go well until they hit the steep hillside. The lead cows stop and won't be driven up that hill. The other riders in the back turn up the heat. Pretty soon, cows are breaking back. Things have unraveled.

The lead rider calls for advice.

The next day, the riders gather up all the stock that have scattered, drive them all together until they are calmly working and they get good movement and start up the hill. This time the head rider is at the front. He pressures the side of the first cow facing uphill. She goes and he steps back, pressuring each cow as it goes by.

The herd is going up. Then two riders go up the sides and straight back down, against the flow. All the stock climb the hill wonderfully. The riders drift and settle them on the new area. They stay where they put them.

What's been learned

The riders have learned that force is counter-productive to control and that whistling and yelling is laziness and lack of knowledge, and if they pressure right and release right away, they get **more** responsive cattle.

Riders work straight lines better. They watch the stock most of the time and change positions as the stock indicate they must. They've also learned a few tips about overcoming some range handling problems like getting stock up a steep hill.

The most crucial thing they have learned is that **the cattle are responding to everything they do**. They are responsible for what the cattle are doing.

They want to learn more.

Four: Good attitude (dedication to the animals is high)

The riders can now handle a big herd in most situations. They have learned to work the middle of the herd when they slow and practiced some sorting at the corral.

They have had some failures at placing the herd but realized it was because they got in a hurry or didn't let the movement die with all the animals in the herd. All of them have taken riding lessons so their horses are getting real light and supple and are highly controllable.

They have learned a few effective strategies for running on the range. Things like bringing the stock all the way up the canyon first instead of starting them at the bottom and grazing up. Once at the top, they let them graze downhill so it's easier for them to graze in the uplands after drinking from the creek. All they have to do to get to the uplands now is walk out horizontally. This is easier for cows and bulls and helps them from clogging up in the bottoms.

They move stock in the cool of the day after they have had an hour of feed or early before they take the first feed of the day. They also show up at the same time of day before the stock start to graze, which makes it easier to move them to a new pasture. They take some extra time to get them mothered up or ready to move.

Inner Change The core of high control and lowering stress

The core of achieving transformational change in a herd is when riders have learned to set up every situation so the stock want to do what riders want.

They watch the animals all the time and change position right away as they see they must. They put themselves in a position to help the animals do things.

The handlers' beliefs have changed because their understanding is greater. They know they have a great deal to offer the stock. They are sure of what the stock will eventually do, so they have some patience about getting them to do it.

Nothing is forced. Problems are corrected by thinking, relying on knowledge, and quiet persistence with the cattle.

Riders are dedicated to stockmanship and no longer have to fight old habits. Problems can be handled independently, because they know and use the principles on how stock learn and always remember the traits of the cattle.

When you've changed this much inside yourself, your actions will show it, the stock will know it right away, and you will have their full trust, respect and attention in a short time.

Now the cattle don't move away from you out of fear or mistrust or because you scare or bother them. They do just what you ask, because they understand it produces what they seek. They respond because they respect what you ask and are sure there's a calm way out. They see there can be a purpose to it. They know that you mean it, because you quietly persist with pressuring. They want to do it and like moving to someplace different. There are few hassles and certainly no wrecks.

This is where the real health benefits come in. You have changed the way cattle normally perceive you. You are the master of all of them. They can deal effectively and comfortably with that, so they turn over real control to you.

When you genuinely blame yourself for whatever goes wrong, either for not working enough ahead of time or for what you did wrong, and more importantly—really see and take satisfaction in all that goes right—that’s positive change and worth much. If you have a sick cow or calf, you quickly assume you created it and seek to correct it. This transformation in you is the core of what creates real change in the stock.

You can stop any herd when needed, have lunch, tell and laugh at jokes. No worries or tension about where the herd will wander off to before you get back. You horse will be better and probably calmer.

Setting goals

My wife and I made a holistic goal that had three parts: First, we described what we deeply valued; second, we identified what we had to produce to help achieve these values; and third, decided what kind of environment we needed to have to support our goal.

Learning about and practicing good livestock handling fits under what we need to produce to realize our values, because it produces more time for us. It produces a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. It also helps us create both healthy range and cattle, which is part of the environment we are creating.

The point is: You must have an end in mind while working stock. It must mean a great deal to you. If everyone in the family or on the ranch doesn’t clearly recognize the importance of it, they won’t do it, and it probably won’t work.

My general goal with my cattle—or anybody else’s that I’m working—is to eventually have the complete but calm attention of every animal in the bunch, 100 percent of the time. Stock should be waiting for what I ask for next and willing to respond to whatever I want them to do whenever I ask. No animals should react to thoughts of their own to protect their safety.

You have to be careful, though, about setting a goal with any animal. Otherwise, you can end up imposing your agenda on them before they can do it. The stock determine, solely, how fast you can progress and reach your goal. You must have in mind what’s possible to achieve but let the animals progress on their timeframe. The source of many handling problems is trying to impose your way of doing it on the stock.

Placing 900 pair on a mountain side

A few years ago, a rider wanted a herd of about 900 pair to stay on an upland range area of a few thousand acres that was between two creeks. He asked for my help, and I agreed.

This area needed to be grazed well. It had a lot of old standing dead plant material that was smothering growth and needed to be eaten or trampled to the soil surface. The soils were starting to crust, and very few young plants were coming up.

We wanted to break up this crust to improve water and air movement and firm up the soil to help grass plants germinate.

We needed a three- or four-day stay for the herd to accomplish this. It meant we had to reverse the typical pattern of grazing where stock grazed the creek bottoms the first three days and a day or so in the uplands.

Basics of high control

The riparian area condition needed to be enhanced so we wanted little or no bank shear from hooves. We wanted some grazing on the banks and knew the cattle would probably select the bluegrass over the sedges, which would give the bank-holding sedges some more sunlight.

The main rider had been working this herd for weeks, so all the stock moved straight ahead when pressured from the sides. They were comfortable when going by us. We moved the herd off the last pasture early in the morning before they got up and started grazing. We drove them a short ways onto the place were they were to stay.

On the way, I noticed that whenever we backed off the pressure a bit the stock really wanted to slow. None wanted to keep going on their own accord, which was a good sign that taking the movement out would be easy. We showed them water on the way as we crossed one creek. We had them lined up a road going up the hillside. Then I rode up the side and let the herd slow.

We let them drift out across the hillsides, spaced so they each had enough feed for a few days. We turned animals at the front so they were facing inward to the herd. We got ourselves well away and watched. We had to stop a few that started drifting too much and turned them back in with light pressure.

This bunch stayed put all week. They went to water in the creeks and returned to the herd. We gathered them up and moved on to the next grazing area easily. The soil crusts were broken up fairly well, and we achieved a very high proportion of plants grazed, at about a 50 to 60 percent level of use at the time.

The next year, more plants came up and the vigor of the older ones had markedly improved. The creeks met all Forest Service standards. This was part of a herd that the year before would have been scattered all over and loafing in the creeks as long as you let them (and even when you didn't let them).

chapter five

Handling principles and behavioral traits

An old horse trainer once told an eager group of students, “None of you will be allowed to ride or handle the horses until you pass a simple test that has just one question.”

With that, he sat down on a bale of straw on top of a pulled horseshoe with nail stubs. He jumped up and asked the students “Why?”

After a moment or two of silence and blank stares, the students said the answer was simple: “Because it hurt.” But the trainer told them their answer was wrong. “None of you understand even the most basic premise of how to handle your horse properly.”

This isn’t a trick question. In fact I’ve asked this same question to many people and few give the right answer.

To help you understand the relevance of this question to livestock handling, consider this example. When I pick up the left rein and apply direct pressure to the left of a hackamore or snaffle bit trained horse, why does it tip his head calmly to the left every time I ask?

Most people say, “Because you pulled.” But that’s the wrong answer.

Some people say, “Because he knows you will keep pulling if he doesn’t.” True, in part, but still wrong.

The natural reaction of a calf or horse to a pull is to resist or pull the other way. Pull straight down on the halter rope under his chin quickly and firmly and see what he does. Keep your chin out of the way if you try this, because his head will fly up!

Try pushing on the hip of a gentle but untrained colt or calf. They will try to maintain their balance by resisting the pressure. They will push back.

If you walk straight toward the side of a cow, why does it calmly walk forward every time? The answer is the same as the horse giving to the bit.

Handling principles and behavioral traits

Principles are handling basics

Livestock, especially cattle or bison, want so badly to get along with us, given the chance. The results of poor handling are animals that are on the fight, leave the herd, or charge the horses. The root cause is a lack of knowledge of the principles of handling livestock.

Principles describe how livestock learn and what guides their decisions. Principles determine when to quit pressuring or keep pressuring. They explain how animals perceive what you're doing and how to communicate with them.

In addition to principles, a rider must know some basic traits or personality type things about livestock—things we do that bug them and what we can do to help them be comfortable. Use of this knowledge will translate into gaining real control. Chapter Eight presents some ways of pressuring stock that riders will also need to know.

The following knowledge is essential to understanding how livestock learn. Using this information will help you get cattle to do what you want.

Calmness—the starting and ending point

Ed Techick, a hall of fame horse trainer and former cattleman, has a wooden sign with the word "CALMNESS" in big bold letters bolted to the door to the arena. Each student sees it every training day.

Calmness is a most important facet of gaining high control of cattle (and horses). You haven't won anything if you don't have calmness in animals after they do what you wanted. If you don't have calmness before asking an animal to do something, they will have trouble doing it or will overdo it.

Something is wrong if stock aren't calm after driving them through a gate or chute, into a trailer, or sorting one away from the bunch. It's either the animals' stage of understanding or your way of asking.

If you approach stock and see they can't be calm, you must work to get a measure of calmness before attempting to get them to do something.

Calmness starts in the handler and ends up in the animal. You must be calm around stock before their behavior will improve. If you are calm and stop chasing cattle, they will quit running away.

Another key to obtaining calmness is obedience. Once cattle learn they can easily obey your signals just by moving straight ahead at a walk, for instance, they gain a measure of calmness.

Quiet persistence in everything you ask them to do is the key to getting calmness in cattle and horses. So be calm and patient, at least a little more than the cattle are. Use only the right techniques. Persist with asking. Change if you are having the wrong effect, and wait until the right things happen. Cattle will understand there is a new deal very soon.

At first it takes a little while for cattle to realize they can control your pressure (prevent it from coming farther) and that you aren't going to get aggressive or forceful. This produces some calmness. They learn obedience is always profitable and get even calmer.

Cattle, though not to the degree of horses, are always looking to see if they should be or have to be in control, if they have to do what you ask, or have to act upon self-preservation.

Horses, especially young horses and stallions, almost constantly test us to see if they can get the edge and take the lead until it becomes confirmed in their minds, through experience, that

we are the absolute masters under any and all circumstances. Horses calm right down when they become sure you are the absolute master. I suppose this is so because they can quit trying to operate on their own.

Much the same, cattle will become calm if you are calm. They will start to trust and follow your signals. Getting this calm, responsive obedience has its roots in understanding all of the following principles.

Motivating cattle with pressure

Cattle do something for us because we motivate them to. We motivate them to move predictably by moving around them the right way. They move or stop moving in order to keep us at a certain distance and to avoid increased pressure.

When we position ourselves and move exactly where the cattle need us to be in order to have them prefer to move the way we desire, this is correct pressure.

Cattle can take a tremendous amount of this type of pressure. A knowledgeable rider can dominate horses and cattle far more than a rough rider can. Riders who understand even basic ways of how to apply pressure and how animals learn get way more work done than those who just line up behind them and scare them in the right direction.

There are ways of moving around cattle that help us find where they need us to be to motivate them to act predictably. For lack of a better term, I'll call these "techniques." Calm cattle move naturally and predictably to these techniques. You must learn and adhere to them or the stock may not move like you want. Using the right technique gets them to turn right, speed up, slow down, stop, etc. How you apply pressure is essential to obtaining calm and highly responsive stock.



Sorting a cow from her calf using correct pressure.

Techniques are applied properly only when based on correct handling principles. These principles are very old, because cows are cows and always have been.

You can pressure stock to start or stop doing something. Proper handling will prevent such things such as stock taking side trails, veering from the herd, quitting the bunch, or fighting.

Here's an example of how to help a cow stop being rotten by pressuring the right way at the right time.

You have a cow that isn't tolerant or attentive to her calf. You have to put them together, and then she kicks hard at her young calf when it nurses.

Here's one idea on how to stop that behavior.

First, work this cow with proper handling until she works well for you. This alone may permanently cure the attentiveness problem with her calf. If she still kicks when nursed, put her in a pen. When the calf sucks, and she is thinking about kicking, pressure her head just the right amount to make her look at you, no more. When

Handling principles and behavioral traits

she looks at you, back off immediately. Then relax and wait. The calf is now sucking, but pretty soon the cow gets this kicking idea again. So you lean forward at her, and she looks at you.

This ends kicking, because cows are single minded. If she is concentrating on controlling you from coming closer by looking at you, she can't kick very well. Soon she learns her udder feels better after nursing.

The more traditional idea of whacking her on the head with a board when she kicks also works. I'm a fan of whatever works, but I like the pressuring idea better because it is less work for me and easier on the cow. Plus, whack a cow on the head a few times after you put her in a pen and see how easy it is to get her back in there!

Pressure and release

Pressure, in itself, means "do something" to cattle or horses. They might decide to run for miles or calmly walk forward 20 yards.

Livestock want relief from pressure more than anything and want to be able to control it. Stress builds up in cattle when they can't find relief from pressure. Panic follows unrelieved stress. Cattle know this. Horses live by it all their lives. I can't emphasize the importance of this enough.

Applying pressure and releasing it correctly at exactly the right time is an essential part of getting animals to want to do (and repeat) something you want them to do—and then do it.

To get this reliability, we must get animals to want to do what we're asking by using techniques that help produce predictable responses. It is very important to release pressure when they do it right. When we release pressure determines whether what the animal just did was the "right thing" or not, in its mind.

Pressure should be applied using the least amount of movement required in order to get your desired response. For example, if you need an animal to move ahead and keep going, you walk in, pressure it to go, let it get a step ahead, then follow the movement and pressure again before it slows. Just as they begin to do it, you release the pressure.

This helps create lightness, life and responsiveness in the stock. They feel they have good control over releasing the pressure that you apply because you aren't in their way of doing it. It helps them be real sure about doing the right thing.

Cattle are their experiences, and they act based on those experiences. We create learning and predictable behavior in livestock by creating experiences in which they do what we want and get what they want.

Cattle don't reason. They gather and store vast amounts of experiences in their minds. Horses have a fantastic sensitivity to what is happening around them and a seemingly endless capacity to store these experiences all their lives.

It appears that cattle and horses store experiences in two main categories—profitable to them or not profitable.

For the most part, a handling experience for a cow consists of pressure, its response, finding relief from pressure, and some passing of time thereafter. This is explained further under the "End the lesson" principle.

Exactly what the animal was doing when pressure was released and some time passed determines how the animal perceives that experience in that setting, profitable or not.

As most of us require pay for our work, cattle also require a paycheck. Relief of pressure is part of their paycheck—a big part.

To ensure that stock want to perform behavior we desire, we must first get them calm enough to at least listen. Then we apply pressure they understand and allow some release of pressure at the exact moment they do what we wanted. Then we allow some peace and quiet in between, at least until they have learned that lesson.

The overall experience becomes that they can move naturally in the way they prefer to move when pressured in certain ways, and we quit coming.

Uncertainty or past experience leads frightened or anxious animals to find relief by running from a handler or trying to dive over a corral fence. They don't prefer to do that, and we don't want them to. So we have to give them a reason, time, and the ability to choose something else.

We must start with simple, positive responses where cattle do what they prefer to do, then find immediate relief from pressure as a result. This builds a foundation for changing cattle behavior. Proper use of pressure gets stock to thinking about doing something else.

The basic idea—

getting stock to do the right things

Applying pressure and releasing it correctly is the key to getting an animal to want to do something specific—and to do it consistently under all conditions when we want.

It's natural for cattle to go straight ahead in response to direct pressure to their sides, to slow when we go up the sides with them, or to speed up when we go against the way they are facing. We don't have to teach them these things. They want to move this way when pressured correctly and when they are calm. All we have to do is create initial calmness and the experience that doing so results in relief.

Start training your sensitive animals with the lightest pressure required to get the desired result. Apply and release pressure just to show them it has a release, if you need to, without requiring them to do anything but stay put or look at you. Later, release the pressure only after they do what you want or even a part of it.

The faster you relieve pressure when they respond correctly, the faster they associate relief from pressure with exactly what they just did, given that you allow a brief period after to let it sink in.

The more precise your request and timing of the release, the more accurately they can respond. General requests get general responses.

Just as they begin to do it, release the pressure. This helps create responsive stock because you aren't in their way of doing it. It helps them be sure they are doing the right thing, which produces calmness.

To stop stock from doing something, don't ease the pressure when they are doing it. Certainly, never allow them soak time.

For example, a herd may set off at a run when I'm just standing quietly 100 yards away. This would be my mistake for being too close, initially, but there is a remedy. Stock like this have experienced relief from pressure and had some time pass after they ran away.

The remedy—let the animals go off a ways so they won't think I'm chasing them. I don't try to force them to stop. After they get 40 to 50 yards away, I just follow them. This way, I don't allow them time to experience that running away is profitable. I use their desire to keep me in sight (to see what's pressuring them) to slow them down.

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Following at the right distance is some pressure to stock, so I'll follow straight behind and ride a bit slower than they are going. They will eventually slow down or stop when they look behind to see me. When they do, I back off, which shows them pressure has an end and gives them time to assimilate that slowing produces relief.

With sensitive stock that haven't run off yet but might be thinking about it, I'll come so close they feel some pressure but not enough for them to move off. I back off before they move, which might be just as they look straight at me. They might think that looking at me controls the pressure and that all I wanted was to get that close. They learn they can stand still and nothing scary will happen.

Only later, after they have seen this, will I pressure so they need to move to get me to stop coming. They find they can also move and the pressure is off them.

Once they are moving off okay, I can ask for continued movement or a turn or slow down. They learn this program very quickly and get comfortable with it. True cow sense means we rely on their natural tendencies to get the responses we want.

Make a promise to your stock

Make all of your stock a promise that you will never break: When they respond right, you will release pressure, every time.

You can pressure and release and still be forcing stock, so make sure it isn't used with force—only with quiet persistence. Your stock will then become calm enough so they can respond exactly how you pressured them to.

The answer to the question

I hope every reader of this section on pressure and release can now answer the old horse trainer's question about why he jumped up when he sat on the shoe.

The real answer: "Because it stopped hurting when I jumped up."

Lessons

Livestock need to have things broken into small lessons. Lessons are steps leading to, or parts of, what you eventually want them to do.

A primary objective when working cattle is usually to convince them that you aren't aggressive, won't force them or do things that bother them, and that pressure has a readily available release. You can't convince them of this if they run two miles every time you show up. So, you have to change how you show up.

For example, a single lesson with real sensitive stock could be approaching them by just standing far away and retreating (releasing pressure) before they get anxious enough to run away. Then stand quietly for a moment or two (end of lesson). Approach again and do the same thing to reinforce that pressure has a release and doesn't keep coming.

What separates the two as different lessons is the time interval between them in which you apply no pressure. If you don't move aggressively—and pressure carefully—most cattle learn after a few times that pressure has a release.

Another example: You want stock to move ahead and keep moving when you pressure them into their sides. These are two separate things to cows, so you have to break it down into different lessons. You pressure the cow into its side. It moves, so you stop coming. Then the cow slows and stops. This isn't everything you want, but that's okay. The cow experienced "move ahead, slow, and stop", is how you control the pressure.

You have to release pressure when the animal moves. You can't ask too soon for it to **keep moving** because that could confuse the animal (some sensitive ones) about what you want. And if you did, the animal would probably think that moving wasn't the right thing to do. It might search for relief by doing something else like running off or spinning around to look at you.

Remember that **time** separates lessons. Separate the two points—move and keep going—to allow the animal to experience and learn one thing at a time.

Once it moves ahead, you can then teach it to move ahead and keep moving. Ask it to move again, but this time pressure again exactly when the cow starts to slow. Now the cow is experiencing that she must move and keep moving to relieve the pressure. Practice this a few times. When timed perfectly, the animal quickly learns that pressure means move and keep moving.

The release of pressure and proper time interval is what is necessary to make it another learning experience or lesson. Usually the minimum time needed to wait is at least a few seconds. It is learned once the horse tips his nose left slightly every time you ask, and you can go to the next lesson.

This lesson could be to ask it to give with its nose and move his shoulder to the left. You apply left rein direct pressure and indirect pressure with the right rein. When it tips his nose left, you must give a slight release to tell "yes, that's

the right direction" but you want something in addition this time. Then hold him there until he moves his shoulder (left front foot) left. When he does, release pressure and wait a few seconds.

This is lesson two in giving to the bit or hackamore. Soon the horse learns to tip his nose in response to rein pressure and move his left shoulder.

End the lesson

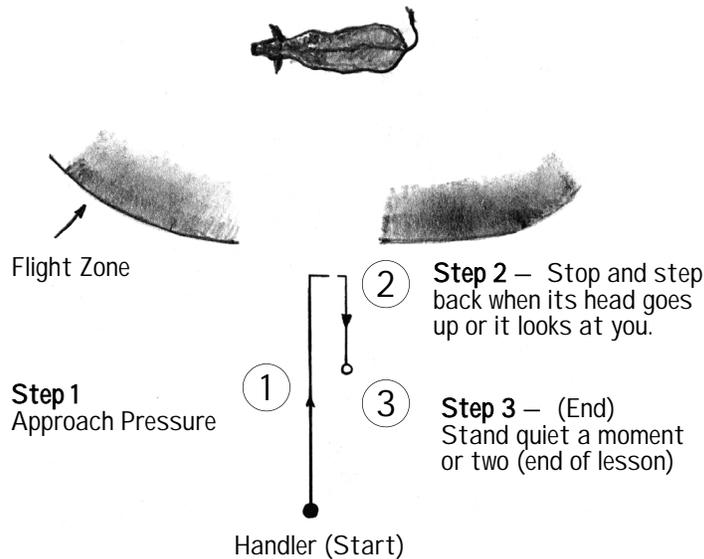
I have mentioned waiting a few seconds after releasing pressure when an animal does the right thing.

This is perhaps the most important scheme in the handling of livestock—all livestock. Creation of every experience an animal has in its life, every learned behavior, I term "a lesson."

"End the lesson" means that after you ask the stock to do something—and they do it right—you release pressure (which is the paycheck or reward) and keep from pressuring again for at least a short period of time.

This short time period is when animals have the opportunity to learn or experience whether what just happened was profitable or not. This time period could be for only a fraction of a second if the lesson was already learned, a moment or two if you are first teaching something, or for the rest of the day, as in the case of placing them.

APPLYING “END OF LESSON” PRINCIPLE ON SENSITIVE STOCK



Step 4 – Watch the animal— see that it is comfortable with this and then approach again, this time even closer.

Step 5 – Turn back before it takes off.

Step 6 – Stand quietly for a moment or until it is calm.

Repeat this approach and retreat until you can get close enough to work the animal effectively. Later, get the animal to move away from your pressure and end the lesson.

Training

Ending the lesson is a tool to use when training, re-training or reinforcing something. Once animals understand what a certain pressure means and do it consistently, asking them to repeat it isn't a lesson so you don't have to end it.

Ending the lesson ensures that the animals clearly associate the release of pressure with the action they just did to get that release. This helps create a calm period after they respond and allows them to clearly assimilate what just happened. This calmness and time interval accelerates learning for the animals—and people.

Ending the lesson when they get it right also allows you to break more complex things into steps so you can get animals good with every part of something you want them to do.

Re-training

Ending the lesson is also an important tool for correcting problems. If cattle know what you want but just don't do it because they don't feel like it or think they don't really have to, correct this with a training lesson. Keep quiet persistent pressure on them to reinforce the idea that they must respond or pressure will persist.

For example, I have some cattle that I want out the gate and onto a stubble field.

It's a real cold day and they are happy to stay put on their nice straw bedding. I pressure them to get up, and they just look at me. I keep up quiet persistent pressure—standing real close—so I don't let the animal end the lesson with a “no” answer. They get up, and I back off and wait. I give them time to stretch and urinate. When they are all up and ready, I ask them to move ahead and out of the corral.

The animals learn they need to go even if they don't feel like it, and that I will persist until they do. Cattle always respond to persistent pressure. They find it irresistible.

Don't let the stock end the lesson on the wrong note. If you have wild stock that are prone to running away, you need to work them so you can get closer and shorten the flight zone to where you want it. Approach, back off a step or two, then stand still before they take off. The approach is pressure, retreating is the release, and standing still a moment or two is the end of lesson. Approach back and forth in straight lines, edging closer each pass.

It is very significant to the animal that you back off instead of letting it take off first. If it took off and got rid of you for a time, it has the chance to form the experience that taking off and getting rid of you is profitable. Pressure was released by taking off, and the lesson ended on that thought. After a few times of the animal ending the lesson, it thinks it's the right thing to do.

Don't release pressure and end the lesson—or allow the **animal** to release and end the lesson—if it is doing other than what you asked or wanted it to do.

Never interrupt or terminate lessons on the account of wrongdoing or resistance by the stock—or for any reason that the stock could construe that way. This is especially important with horses, but I use this scheme in working stock all the time.

Sometimes it's impossible to prevent animals from releasing pressure before you want; for instance, when you jump some cattle and spook them. Properly following stock that run away avoids ending the lesson there and keeps it from becoming a learned experience.

So if they take off, follow them—not too close—and go slower than they are going. This will put enough pressure on them so they know that running won't get rid of you. Done right, they won't feel pressured to keep going either. When they slow or stop, end the lesson there.

The principle here is that you are keeping the same lesson by following them. You are not allowing them the time to experience that taking off and running is the right thing to do when approached. You are showing them it isn't profitable to run by following persistently until you get a change in their behavior. Help the behavior change by following in their blind spot so they will want to turn, which will prompt them to slow. The stock will quickly understand this and calm down, allowing you to pressure them again and get a calmer response.

The longer an animal takes to understand your pressure, the longer the ending of the lesson wait should be. With real sensitive animals that have been handled wrong, I wait longer so they have more time to relax and get calm.

When animals are conditioned to pressure (now pressure is really only a cue), you can discontinue ending the lesson to save yourself time.

Ending a lesson when teaching an animal to move away from pressure by approaching its side could mean giving it a few steps after it moves off before you pressure again. You could stand there or even ease back a little after it responds to make it even clearer.

Ending the lesson means if you ask an animal to turn to the right (when you step out wide to the left side behind it) and it turns, you quit pressure and don't pressure it to turn again for a few seconds. It could also mean that after placing a herd, you leave them completely alone for the rest of the day. Once you pressure and the animals respond, release and end the lesson correctly.

Handling principles and behavioral traits

When you pressure again, this becomes a whole new lesson, because pressure has been separated by time. The new lesson can build on a previous lesson or it might be a new movement entirely. Regardless, the animal views it as a new learning experience and will add it to its memory and act on how it cataloged the results the next time you handle it—profitable to do or not profitable to do.

Step by step examples: Lessons and end the lesson

Livestock learn to trail as a herd and horses learn to load in a trailer by first learning all the little things that comprise that task. To drive well, cattle must first be comfortable with going straight ahead when pressured. Then they learn to go and keep going. Then to speed up, slow down, stay together, stop, and so forth.

Now, when I say we need to teach animals with lessons to go, stop, turn, or speed up, we aren't really training cattle to do these things. Calm cattle will already do them. We have to be sure, however, that they are calm and comfortable enough with our handling to be able to do these things. It's a good check on whether you are working in the right places to be able to prompt them to do what you want.

Here is a simple example of progressing with a herd with step by step lessons.

We need all our cattle to go straight ahead when pressured into their sides. Our objective is to get them to walk straight ahead and keep going a reasonable distance. When first handling a cow of average disposition, do the following:

Pressure a cow into her side. As she walks straight ahead, quit pressuring (halt and just stand there a few seconds). She moves off about 10 yards and stops and looks back at us. By halting and waiting a few seconds (ending the lesson after she moved straight), the lesson for the cow is that pressure has a release and walking straight

ahead and moving off 10 yards is the way to get it. She gained by moving straight ahead, but she chose to move only 10 yards.

We might wish that our cattle went straight ahead and kept going farther than that. She stopped too soon for our liking, so the next lesson is to keep going farther. The lesson starts this way:

Pressure her into her sides and she walks ahead 10 yards, but this time you follow her a bit and then come in again, just as she thinks about slowing. She keeps going, and now the lesson is that walking straight ahead and continuing farther than 10 yards is profitable. Repeat this a few times, and it becomes experience. Your cow learned that walk straight and keep going is the thing to do.

Stock can learn "bad" things too. If your stock run through a gate after driving them through it and they get off and away from you for a short time in which there is no pressure, the lesson they experienced is that running through gates is profitable and it's the thing to do next time. Horses are very quick to pick up bad habits this way, except that to a cow or horse, they aren't bad habits. Only they gain or they don't.

If you followed these cattle right up after they ran through the gate and turned or slowed them, the lesson learned is that running through the gate isn't profitable.

All livestock learn to do what their experience has shown will profit them. Unless forced, they won't do what experience has shown is not profitable.

So, whenever you first obtain the correct response from an animal, end the lesson by not persisting in pressuring for at least a few seconds. You can back off or let the animal move off to relieve pressure. Repeat until lessons are learned.

Handling principles and behavioral traits

You can end the lesson for an hour or a day, but there must be some interval of time between lessons. Some horse trainers call this “soak time.” The “end the lesson” principle explains a little more in depth why and how “soak time” works.

Train stock where you can

Animals can't learn or experience positive lessons from us if they aren't calm enough to respond without feeling they should act upon their instinct of self-preservation. Sometimes even skillful attempts at calming stock will fail if you're working them while they feel too confined, real hungry, hot and scared, or tired.

If stock are wild and unresponsive in a certain setting, then go to a place where they are able to pay more attention to shorten training time. Some will have difficulty paying attention and learning if they are in a confined area such as a corral where you are always within their flight zone. Work them in a bigger corral or pasture.

For the fastest results, get your stock working for you at a time and place when they will be most responsive.

Training stock initially on steep mountain range is difficult, because terrain limits use of some techniques. Cows and calves can separate in the willows. They can run over the hill and hide out, veer off into the swamp, or stay in the creek bottom.

If you can, train stock to handle well for you in a more suitable area prior to turnout. Presenting riders with a trained herd at the beginning of the grazing season will help reduce stress, because they have a herd that handles well from the start.

Stock concerned about being in a corral and pressured can sometimes learn that pressure has a release (you will only come in so close) by working them from a position outside the corral.



Work cattle in an easy place when you're first starting out.

Handling principles and behavioral traits

Some stock can be too stressed to learn well when worked alone. If an animal isn't responding well when worked individually, then work it with a group of animals until it can be worked alone.

If stock don't respond calmly to good handling within 10 to 15 minutes (suppose they stay flighty and nervous or improvement is slow), go to a different setting and work from there. You are not "letting" animals get away with anything by accommodating their fears and stress by putting them with others or in a better training area. You are helping them understand what you want and to respond well in a reasonable time-frame.

Livestock, especially cattle, are easy to work when you understand some basic aspects of behavior because they want so badly to get along with us, given the chance.

The following traits and characteristics are essential to understanding cattle and letting them give us natural responses.

Essential cattle traits

Flight/pressure zone

Pressure only has meaning to stock when the handler or dog gets close enough to prompt them to respond. When you are operating within this zone, everything you do affects the animal. If you're within this zone, they will move, slow, stop, or turn. If you're outside of it, they won't.

Although I dislike the term "flight zone," it has become the established way to describe when animals move from something like a predator or dog when it gets too close. The distance at which they run away is the "flight zone."

This zone isn't a set distance or narrow line. How fast and at what angle you approach makes a difference, so the zone varies with the circumstance and situation.

Every herd has animals that are more sensitive to human presence than others. That's why a herd gets lined out after you start a drive with the more sensitive ones at the front. They are putting themselves at the distance they are comfortable with, away from you.

Pressure for an animal to respond will build the farther you get into the zone. When pressured, it is deciding what direction to go, where the herd is, or where its calf is. You might be able to approach an animal to 30 yards and stand still, and it will just drift off after a few minutes. If you approach the zone faster, it may allow you to get to within 15 yards, but it will move away at a faster pace.

If an animal is moving, its flight zone becomes greater.

Weather can also affect the flight zone.

The flight zone will be larger in a corral, because the animals feel confined.

A single animal away from the herd may have a longer flight zone than when it's with the herd, because it feels less secure away from the bunch.

If you stay in the flight zone without allowing a way out for the animal, you create stress. Work livestock by entering and then exiting this flight zone. It usually works that they put themselves out of it by moving away, and you just don't keep coming at them.

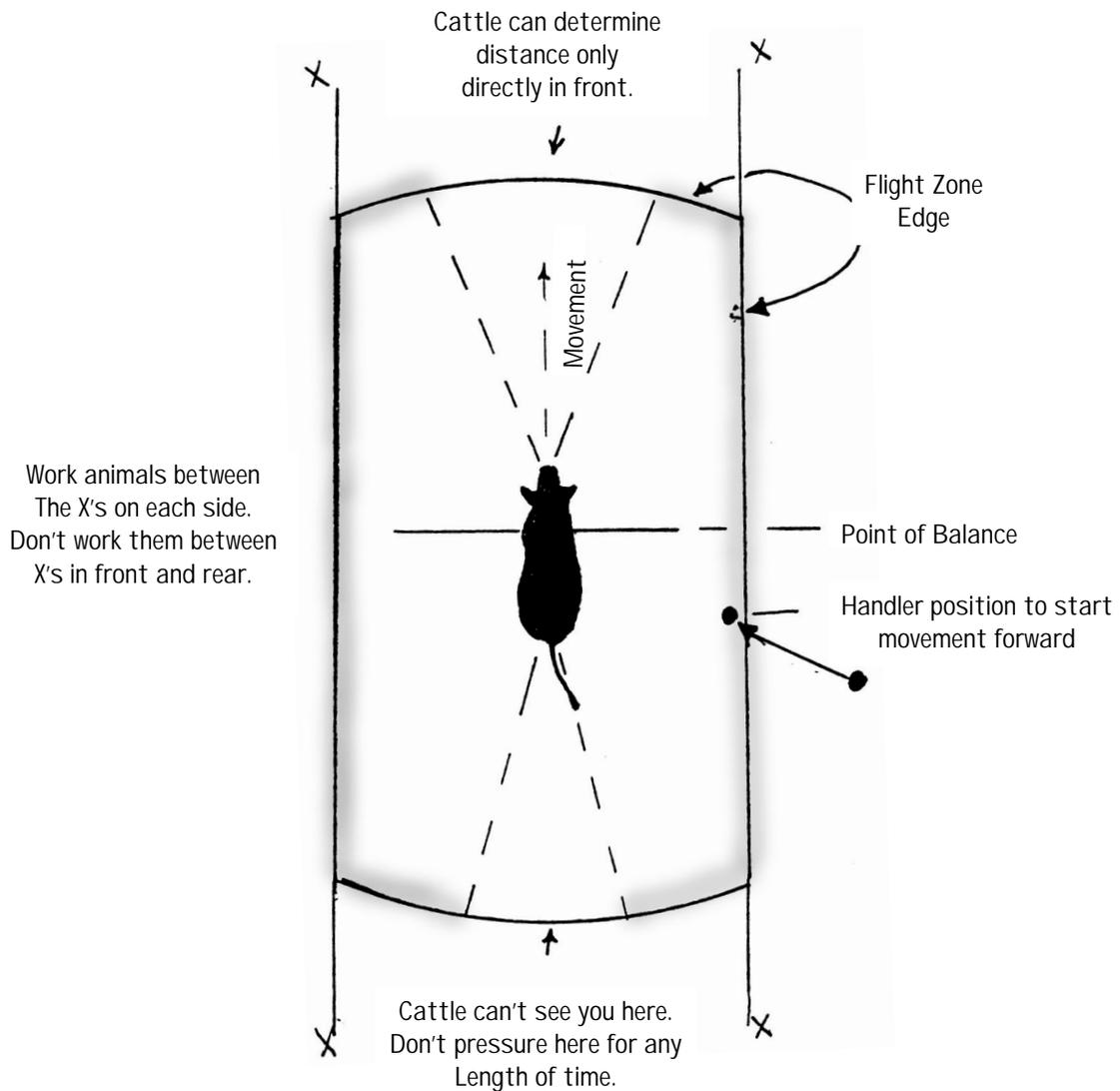
Don't stay in the flight zone if the stock are doing what you want. You are affecting them whenever you are within the zone, and they will do something in response to you being there. Livestock want relief from pressure and will do something to get that relief.

If you're already in the flight zone, such as in a corral, you may need to work them until they understand you will only come so close.

CATTLE FLIGHT ZONES

The flight zone is not a circle around the animal. It tends to be closer at the sides and farther out in front and back. It might be somewhat larger in the back. It changes with the situation and with time.

DIAGRAM 1



Handling principles and behavioral traits

Watch the animals to determine the distance that you need to work in and out of to get and keep movement going. Adapt to what they are showing you.

Standing animals, especially, will show you signs of when you are close to their zone and when you are well outside it. When you are close, they will usually turn an ear on you. If they turn their heads and look at you with both eyes, you are more likely in it. If you get too far in too quickly, they could take off too fast. This isn't what you want.

Good handlers maintain some sensitivity as to where this zone is and notice when it changes. The more you work just in and out of it, the more refined your control gets and the less motion and time (and horse) you waste.

Cattle want a leader

Cattle want a leader. The leader can be a person if it is someone they trust and don't fear. They will certainly follow a dog or horse. If you aren't in absolute control, however, one of the cows will take over the lead. You must handle them right to obtain absolute control and be the leader.

With the right approach, cattle won't resent you asking them to do things. In fact they will turn over almost total control, because they can have such tremendous faith in a person who handles them well.

Cattle are extremely sensitive and cognizant of everything we do. They don't use logic or reason to figure things out. Many times I've thought, "These dumb heifers can surely see the gate, they can go up this hill, they can cross this river."

Cattle can readily be controlled, but they need us to be with them all the time. If you can accommodate them when they are scared, when they can't see where to go, or when they perceive that

a way is closed, they know you did that. This builds trust. Predators don't do that, and they know it.

Cattle also have to experience that they can do anything you ask and can readily control pressure. They need to know there is eventually a release of pressure. Combine this with having the stock experience many times that they got through many different situations under your direction, and you build confidence and trust.

So, when I say you must first get the stock working well for you before taking them out on the range, this is the idea of it.

Cattle want to see what is pressuring

It's extremely important to remember whenever you are handling cattle, that they want to see what or who is pressuring them. There isn't any situation in handling that I can think of where you shouldn't be cognizant and accommodating of this trait.

Correcting animals that quit the herd is about the only exception to the rule where I deliberately pressure from directly behind and then only slightly enough to get them to turn and look at me or slow down.

Cattle can see you if **you** can see at least one eye. If you can't see an eye, you're too far in behind to be working them to go straight ahead.

Knowing that stock want to see what is pressuring them is an extremely useful thing. For instance, if you want stock to see the gate and go through it, then stand where they can see you and the gate. Pressure them from that area. This will make it easier for them to do it right the first time, and you can control speed and direction from one place.

If you're driving cattle from behind, keep moving back and forth so you stay in their collective sight area. Sometimes you'll do better by mov-

ing a herd from the sides or by leading them in some situations such as crossing a trail bridge or narrow path. You have to use your judgement and see what is best to help the stock do what you want.

Riders who chat and tell lies when the herd is moving well often create the cattle that take side trails. They are bugged because they can't see them.

Cattle want to know what we want

Cattle are very willing to work hard for us. They readily submit to good handling and are easily dominated without resenting it.

Cattle have a rather strong sense of self-preservation so they try to size up your intent when you approach, especially at first.

If they have experienced good handling from you enough, they soon recognize you as the person they trust to work for. Then they can stay calm. But, in these cases, they are still likely to be formulating an idea of what they can do to relieve pressure. Skillful handlers (and horse-men) are very clear about what they want the stock to do.

Cattle are more deliberate thinkers than the average horse. They are less inclined to flight and more inclined to observe for a moment before relying on speed or fighting to get out of the situation. You can help keep them calm if you don't approach them head on. Always walk in straight lines around them. Predators never do that.

Be specific when you're around them and when you ask them to do something. The more specific your request, the better they will respond. Ask them to move out straight with good movement, or to stop moving and stand still. If you don't want something, then get well out of their flight zone. Learn the techniques well.

Stay up close to stock when you want them to move. Most people work from too far away. This makes them wonder what you're doing and can make them anxious. Move in straight lines. Make your movements deliberate, straight, and precise. Release pressure quickly when they respond correctly.

If you are standing in a gate or blocking an alley, for instance, keep some sort of movement going, even if it's minor movement. You can stand in one spot but move your shoulders or hands. This helps them relax, because they don't perceive you as stalking them or getting ready to pounce.

Young cattle (yearlings in particular) are curious, like horses. This can result in a big urge to see you when pressuring them and makes it hard to get them to drive at first. Work them closer to the head. And again, work with quiet persistence. They will get to working for you in good time.

Impatience

Cattle are impatient when pressured, and they will do something soon to find relief. Give them a minute to decide how to respond to your pressure, especially when you're getting them better at handling. They need this patience from you when you're asking more difficult things such as separating one from a herd, crossing deep water, or going up a chute.

Set it up right, persist quietly, wait, and they will do it. Just let them do it on **their** timeframe and don't rush it.

Handling principles and behavioral traits

Cattle respond to angle of approach

Your direction or angle of pressure is very important as it affects what the stock will do. Calm cattle will respond predictably if they are working well for you.

For instance, if you pressure into their sides, aiming towards the shoulder or ribs from either side, or approach from a slight angle from the rear, they will go straight ahead.

If you walk straight towards the hip, approaching from behind and off to one side, the hip will turn away.

As a rule, whenever you are working animals from their sides, pressure at a forward angle for all forward movements. Sharper angled approaches are more likely to get prompt forward movement. The more perpendicular the angle of approach you take, especially towards the neck or hip, the tighter the animal will turn.

Other important characteristics about the way stock will move when approached in different directions:

If a calm animal is walking away from you and you walk up along side of it (by the tail first and on towards the head), it will slow down. On a horse, this spot is at the cinch line. On a cow, about the same, but perhaps a little forward. As you continue to go past its shoulder, it will stop. Subsequently if you turn around, reverse direction and go by it again, going from head to tail, it should pick up a walk and go straight ahead. If it was walking when you go down its side, it will speed up.

If you have a bunch of stock in the middle of a field and walk straight lines, back and forth on any side of the herd, they will walk away directly perpendicular to your lines. You will soon be at the back of the herd.

If you are behind a herd that is moving well and walking lines back and forth (either straight lines or zigzagging), as you should, and you extend your line out way to the side and stay there for a little bit, the lead animals will turn. If you go out wide to the right, the lead stock will turn to the left. If you go out wide to the left, the lead will turn right.

Some situations can cause these natural responses to alter. An example is when driving stock up a fence line that is to their right. The fence is pressure to them on the right, so they will tend to drift left and won't be moving exactly perpendicular to your lines. To compensate for the fence pressure on their right, adjust your angle so you are working more off to their left.

Be mindful of what effect your approach angle has on the animal changing directions (see Chapter Eight for more information). Understand that how you approach—either slow and cautious or stepping right in and looking them right in the eye—makes a difference too.

Cattle are spot related

Cattle (to a degree) and horses (to a high degree) associate good or bad experiences with the location of all things around them when it happened. That spot becomes associated with what happened and what to do.

Notice that a horse will buck or shy on one spot in the arena, no matter that the cause of the first buck or scare has been removed. It probably won't buck there, however, if it's headed across that spot going a different direction. To be safe, you could lunge the horse across the spot and have him make calm tracks over it rather than ride over it and risk getting dumped.

If stock were rushed or forced off a riparian area, they will remember being comfortable there before the handler did this. The more sensitive ones will return to it as soon as they can. Right to the same spot. They can be rushed off

this spot a bunch of times, and they will still go back to it a bunch of times if they believe that's the place stress has relief.

If stock were pressured without relief when they were in a herd situation, the more sensitive ones will quit the bunch when they have a chance. Forcing them back in will just make them more sure that the herd is a rotten place and that getting rid of you is profitable.

If they were well handled in a drive and remember going with the herd as being comfortable, they will be easier to drive the next time because they will want to stay together and move together.

Cattle want to be comfortable and have a strong sense of self-preservation. If you let them keep that, they will go with you anywhere. You can readily make everything you want them to do a good experience—being sorted away from the herd, being with the herd, or staying put on the new grazing area.

Cattle are single-minded

Cattle don't reason things out using logic. They aren't capable of thinking things through step by step and then arriving at a conclusion about what to do. They just assimilate experiences.

Every situation, place and setting, and what happened to them there, whether it was good or bad, appears to be cataloged in their minds. They have a keen ability to do this and are probably more sensitive to what is happening around them than we can imagine. Horses are highly developed this way.

Because of the way cattle catalog and act upon experiences, they appear to us to be very single-minded.

Single minded means that after they decide what the situation is, they rely on past experiences to determine what they do. Once decided, they can

be somewhat—to very—stubborn about sticking to that decision. They can be intent on running away, quitting the herd, going back to find a calf, staying put, going to that certain place, up that certain trail—or conversely, on paying attention to what we are asking.

Perhaps no other attribute of cattle causes so many riders to blow a gasket.

When they decide on an avenue we don't want, it simply takes a little knowledge, some patience, good handling, and quiet persistence to change that problem.

Take a calf at the back end of the herd. You (somebody else probably did it) spin a calf around so now its facing away from the herd. It will look up and probably take off running as fast as it can towards the last place it experienced being next to its mother. This can be miles the other way.

Most of us who have experienced this know that if the calf gets too far, it can keep you pretty busy trying to get it headed back the right way to see the herd. Even when you turn it the right direction, it appears blinded for a time and can't see the herd. It has decided on the wrong direction, and it takes some doing for the rider to change its mind.

The cure for this is not to spin it around in the first place, but it happens and serves to show a little about how cattle make decisions.

I was at a guest ranch one day when the owner asked if it would be okay to have some of his guests help move the herd. We had 1,000 yearlings to move, but they had been previously well handled. So I said I thought it might be okay. We had a quick meeting with the guests about staying in line, and I emphasized that no one should go up the sides.

Handling principles and behavioral traits

One fellow spoke up and said he found it hard to believe it was so important to stay right in a straight line. After all, the leaders would be so far ahead. I said, "Just believe it." But I knew he didn't.

We had a few wrecks at the start. One guest got his horse stuck. There were a few loose cinches, but as time went on the herd was moving nicely. About an hour into the drive the leaders and the herd veered to the right. I couldn't see what was causing it. I was on the far right side, guiding, and the range was hilly so I couldn't see all the riders.

I went wide to the right to straighten them, but it had no affect.

I moved straight up towards the leaders and went back and forth at an angle. This didn't turn them and only worried them. Then I did it at a trot, but it still had no affect.

Next I pressured the lead animals directly into their necks. They turned but snaked around again to the right.

Now I was about out of tricks. A ranch rider joined me, and we both worked the right side but still had almost no lasting affect. I said, "Just stay out wide," and I took off at a gallop to see what was happening.

I rode past the other riders until I finally got to the last rider on the left side. There he was, the same guy who didn't believe it was important to stay in line. He was 30 yards up the left side, just poking along. I waved him back. The second he was out of there and back in line, the entire herd shifted back to the left and straightened out.

This rider rode up to me later and said he understood a little better what I was talking about. It was a good learning experience. The animals

had decided to turn from him and stuck with that decision. Two or even three riders couldn't change their minds.

Good memory

Cattle have good memories. In a calm frame of mind, they learn fast, often faster than you think possible. When they are rattled and stressed, they can't learn much and rely on past experiences to get them through.

Compared to horses, cattle are deliberate thinkers, less inclined to flight, more inclined to look over a situation first, then go by instincts or past experiences to decide what to do. They are always learning.

You are training livestock whenever you are handling them. Bad experiences stay with them, as do good ones. Handling makes the difference on which it is for them. Pressure correctly, release with perfect timing, and wait a few seconds if you are first working them. Let the right things happen. They remember in what situation they were comfortable or uncomfortable. They will long remember good handling.

Cattle are herd animals

Cattle are most comfortable in a herd and usually prefer not to be alone. They perceive the herd as providing both safety and social benefits. The reason cattle leave the herd, other than temporary situations such as a cow leaving to calve, is because we have stressed them.

One partial exception is when new cattle (brands) are introduced to another herd. They usually don't want to be with this herd at first. Gathering both groups and working them to drive well together will get the new stock incorporated into the herd very quickly.

Good handling helps cattle associate comfort with a herd and allows them to act on their natural desire to stay as a herd. Stressful handling can make them leave it.

Movement attracts movement

Cattle will follow other stock that are moving. In a well-handled herd, movement attracts movement, and they will follow the best movement.

This is an important trait to use to start and keep a herd going. Cattle that just drift or plod along don't entice others to follow. They will follow the one that has an idea of where it's going. They have an almost childlike attitude about following a leader. It doesn't actually have to be the herd leader, just one that walks like it knows where it's going.

That's why we train stock to pick up good movement. It attracts others to go with them, so we don't have to pressure every animal to go or keep going.

Cattle prefer to go where they're headed

Cattle prefer to go in the direction they are already facing or going. Pressure into the sides of animals or walk lines behind them, and they should go straight ahead.

When you first work with cattle and ask for movement, let them pick the direction they move. They will get around to going straight when they get comfortable with you, if you're signaling them right.

Avoid spinning them around or jumping in front of them. This really bothers them and will make them hesitant to go by you. Teach them it's okay to move away straight. This also makes it easy to predict which way they will go when you pressure them. Work on getting them to turn after they are comfortable going straight.

Sensitivity changes

Livestock sensitivity to pressure, handler position and movements changes with circumstances and situations.

Flight zones tend to get wider when stock are up against a fence or when individuals are away from the herd.

Being in familiar settings can make the flight zone smaller.

Weather and recent events can change livestock sensitivity to pressure.

The flight zone lengthens when stock are moving.

Cattle are more sensitive to a new handler at first but get used to a good handler real soon.

Stock can readily detect your mood and attitude, so work them another hour or day if you're in a bad mood or in a hurry. They recognize patterns of behavior, so yours can affect them if it changes.

Stock that have been chased by predators, especially wolves, can be very sensitive. In this case, I make it a point to take the stress off them.

If you leave cattle on a good note the day before, they will be on a rather good note over-all when you show up again. This characteristic is one reason to keep lessons short and positive. Ask the animal to do only what you know it is ready to do.

Handling principles and behavioral traits

Some ways to think about handling problems
Cattle's hooves are connected directly to their minds.

We want cattle operating off the more rational and calm part of their brains rather than their instinct for self-preservation, which gets into their emotional side. Good livestock handling means working with the minds of animals. You can't expect their feet to go where you want if you don't have their minds first.

If their hooves go someplace you prefer they didn't, the reason lies within one of three categories:

- Their mental state (calm and clear-thinking, understanding and learning)
- Their emotional state (anger, fright, panic or stress)
- Their physical condition (healthy, unhealthy, tired, hungry, or thirsty)

Whenever I handle new stock, I focus on getting a feel for their mental and emotional state and physical condition. I approach them in the lightest way so as not to overexpose them and then watch to determine which part needs attention first.

Usually, it's the emotional side. They have experienced rough and aggressive handling and need to experience that it's not going to happen anymore.

Sometimes they haven't been handled too roughly but don't respond well because of a lack of understanding about what I am pressuring them to do. Perhaps I'm not moving quite right for the herd in this setting. Maybe they are hot and thirsty or hungry or sick. In these cases, I let them rest or graze or put them in the sick pen and doctor them.

Done correctly, proper handling will change emotional reactions into calm, responsive mental reactions. Then, with practice, stock will respond naturally and responsively to everything you ask them to do.

Calm, well-handled stock rarely get sick. They eat better, calve easier, and gain more weight.

I look for stock to show signs they are actually excited about going someplace different, like to a new pen or pasture. Good emotions like that produce healthier animals.

Some older stock seem to get used to rough handling over time but are still stressed and never turn over real control to you. Look for the subtle signs that will tell you the cattle are emotionally upset.

Take care of our livestock's physical needs. Don't move them too far without rest or short them on water or feed. Good physical care with handling that doesn't stress them is the key to keeping them healthy.

Stock don't want the exertion of spinning around, running off, or fighting the handlers. Given half a reason, they soon stop doing these things. Once they see they can just move comfortably, they see the contrast.

Don't deliberately tire animals so they will be calmer and easier to work. Cattle have been killed from exhaustion, because some riders thought they would see it their way before they collapsed. Stock that are convinced they need to run to avoid pressure will run, and they can run so long that it damages their lungs or heart.

Livestock have a good attention span but give them a break in training if they get too tired. Rewarding good responses with some peace and rest has a big affect on them. I find that breaking up handling sessions over a few days is effective.

Handling principles and behavioral traits

When livestock get stressed and panicked, they get sick, injured, or lose weight and behavior worsens.

Animals that get some exercise are better emotionally. They really need daily exercise, whether confined or on a pasture. It helps them relieve any stress they may have. Sometimes we need to go out and get them to do this, even if it simply involves moving them to another corral or pasture and back again. Notice that penned cattle will cough stuff up when moved around. This is a good thing and necessary for maintaining health.

Calves or younger stock that lay down in a pen or pasture when they should be up eating or drinking need to be worked correctly so they will get up and eat as they should.

Whenever you encounter handling problems, look at the stock and decide whether the problems are emotional, mental, or physical. This will help you decide how to solve the problem.

Cows are honest

Cows (and horses) are really honest. There is no deliberate deception on their part, and no acting.

If they are acting stressed, scared, or calm, then they really are. If they are having trouble going through the gate, the gate is trouble. Past experience or the way you're asking is wrong enough to prevent them from doing it. If you're paying attention, they will always tell you.

Try to remember that sensitivity is real on their part and not an attempt to annoy you.

Remember that when you approach new stock, they want to know your intent. With some stock, their question is when to run and where to hide. With well-handled stock, their only question is, "Which way does he want us to walk?"

We should be very clear in what we want stock to do, which will help make them comfortable. Move, turn, speed up, or slow down—make your intent clear and precise. Moving in straight lines helps stock understand your intent.

Livestock have an amazing ability to detect your attitude and intent. They can read your body language. If you go in a pasture or pen feeling stressed or in a hurry, they will detect it and respond to it, regardless of how hard you may try to cover it up. If you're stressed out, don't work stock, especially calves.

Everything you do affects the stock when you are within the flight zone, so if you're watching the cattle, they will mirror your level of understanding.

Never fool your stock into doing something. Don't entrap them in a corral or trick them into the trailer. They will know it if you do. Keep yourself 100 percent honest when handling, like the cattle.

chapter six

Mindset of a good rider

People are probably the ultimate predators. Nothing rattles livestock like people mishandling them. Perhaps this is because our natural reaction is to force the issue when confronted with a problem.

Traditional handling

Since modern handling creates a host of problems, cattle are forced a lot. We rope them into trailers, hot shot them up into the chute, scare them up an alley, run them off the creek, or cram them through the gate.

I saw a stampede one July day when 1,500 cows and calves were driven 12 miles. Then they ran back 12 miles because they ultimately couldn't take the pressure of being driven through a gate. It was an exceptionally wide gate, but they couldn't go through. The riders couldn't get ahead of the dust to stop the stampede. They handled the drive and going through the gate the way most people handle cattle around here.

I'm sure these cows didn't want to stampede in the middle of a hot summer afternoon, and I'm real sure the riders didn't want them to. The riders made a gather and tried the same drive again the next day.

The stock still couldn't go through that gate, but they were ready for it (cow sense). They had a few extra riders and held them from breaking back. But they had to drive them five miles beyond the gate, through one pasture and a pass leading into the right one.

In doing so, they lost the use of the pasture they drove the stock through, because they had grazed the creek bottom down to minimum stubble height standards. The managing agency wouldn't allow them back into it.

At least 125 calves had to be doctored for pneumonia the following week.

Traditional handling versus stockmanship

I was working cattle one day with Bud Williams, and we had a few hundred head going smoothly through a gate.

All of a sudden Bud stopped working the herd from where he was. One animal had stopped to look back at us. Bud went up a little wide and towards the gate, past the animal. It calmly moved right on through, just because

Mindset of a good rider

Bud moved up that way so it could see him. This one, out of hundreds, needed help, Bud accommodated him.

Most of us would have got right in there and pressured it to go. That's was my first thought at the time.

That may have worked for the moment, but it wouldn't have alleviated the concern this animal had about seeing us the next time we worked him.

The concern was real to the animal and important enough to stop it from going. So it was important enough for Bud to address.

It might seem annoying to have to change what you are doing, but accommodating stock this way produces calmer animals and more control the next time you handle them.

There are two distinct attitudes between handlers in these two examples, and certainly, two different sets of knowledge.

Bud knows that if cattle are working well for us (take pressure well), and if we work where they need us to be, they won't short out at the gate.

If Bud had been on the drive when the cattle stampeded, I'm pretty sure he would have worked them first until he knew they would go through. And he probably wouldn't have wanted "help" from those riders.

We have the knowledge laid on the table to get high control over cattle. We have two choices to make: Handle the stock with whole-hearted dedication to learning and thinking—or stay the course and deal with the never-ending problems and limitations of traditional handling.

How cattle respond is a direct reflection of how well you control yourself. The calmness and responsiveness of your cattle reflects how well you turn over your will to how they need to be handled.

If you want healthy animals and high control, you must be willing, in every situation, to get the job done right. Right means the way the cattle need it done.

Effective riders have a good attitude. Some have just a little skill at it, others a little more. But all of them take full ownership of the fact that they are causing whatever the herd does on the range.

The best handlers have the best attitudes. They watch, adjust, and constantly move to where the stock show them they need to be to get the job done right, all the time.

Put the same energy into learning and watching that you once put into chasing wild cows. Nobody likes wild cattle, so why make them that way? Don't tolerate wild ones. Change them by working them right.

Confidence in this method, backed with a little knowledge, will get things done right. I know I can get cattle calm and responsive. It doesn't matter where. Because of this belief and confidence, I know I can do things very easily that formerly took hard riding and help.

I was riding with an agency fellow one day on an allotment in Mackay, Idaho, checking the progress of a new range plan. I went one way and he the other. He rode up about an hour later, his horse all lathered up. Chased by wolves? No. He had seen a few cattle in a paddock where they shouldn't be, right near a gate. He thought he would just drive them out real quick since he was there. He chased 'em 45 minutes and then gave up.

He asked if I could help. We rode up to find 5 or 6 tired cows and a few calves lying in a wide draw 40 to 60 yards from the open gate. We rode wide of them, and I got off my horse. I approached them from the side, edging a little closer each time until I could see which head went up first. Then I backed off and waited.

I did this a few more times, edging closer and waiting each time if they got alarmed. I pressured the most sensitive one into her side and backed off. I pressured again in a minute, and she got up. I pressured again, backed off, and she trotted off about 10 yards.

The agency fellow whispered that I had her headed the wrong way, that she would run up the hill again. He wanted to ride up to block her in case she went that way. “No,” I said, “It’s all right.” I waited a minute, pressured her again, and she moved. So I stopped and waited. I pressured her hip away and she turned, facing the gate. I pressured into her side, and she walked straight towards the gate. I just walked along off to her right side, angling out and away from her, guiding, so she didn’t circle me and miss the gate.

I did about the same thing with another one. Then the others followed and went through as I worked from near the gate. They headed off to rejoin the herd.

There was very little skill involved in my doing this—and almost no physical effort. It took just a little understanding of why these cows couldn’t go through the gate. I had a whole lot of caring about getting them in a frame of mind so they could do it. That’s all. The cattle wanted to get across the fence anyway, just not with a rider racing around behind them. The herd was on the other side, not far over the hill.

Later that week, the association had to trail the whole herd up a road. The same agency fellow told me there was a place where the stock always went off the road into a wet meadow off to the left. He said he would just as soon that didn’t happen again.

I told him it wouldn’t if he would get ahead and stand on the uphill side of the trail to the stock’s right as they trailed through and pressured into their sides a little bit as they went by.

As I brought the first of the herd onto that part of the road, I saw him off his horse and standing below the road, blocking the side trails to the meadow. He was having a heck of a time blocking them.

So I rode up on the opposite side on the uphill of the trail and meadow and pressured cows as they went by. Most of the time I just kept up a little motion while on my horse. The next 500 or so pairs went straight by without falling off into the meadow.

The moral of this story: **Don’t try to stop cattle from doing what they aren’t doing.**

If you put yourself in the place to block them, they look to see you, then follow their head. You created exactly the problem you set out to prevent.

Believe that cattle want to see what’s pressuring them. They won’t turn and lose sight of you if you are pressuring. Work them from a place where they can see you and where you want them to go.

Riding is a tough job, but it can be a whole lot easier when riders learn the traits of cattle, how they learn, and how to move them.

Mindset of a good rider

Attitudes about force and getting the job done at the expense of livestock or range health have to change. Cattle will do everything we need and will be healthier if we just set it up right and let them do it.

To livestock, force is anything they construe as giving them little or no option but to go a certain way or do a certain thing. If you move to stop or block cattle, relaying the idea “no,” that’s force.

The real secret is to never let them know they are under restraint. Never make them to do anything they don't want to do. Let it become their idea to do everything you want.

Believe the facts about how livestock learn and what traits you have to accommodate to let them do what you want. Use them in every facet of animal handling as you pressure animals. Do this from day one. As you gain experience, your trust will increase.

Quiet persistence in pressuring is all that is ever needed until stock have had enough time to experience that they will not be trapped or forced into doing anything. Let them learn that doing the “wrong” thing produces continued pressure, which will help them want to do what you ask. They will do it when they are able to. This refers to everything—turning, slowing, speeding up, going through a gate, and stopping.



“Wildest cattle I ever seen. One or Two in a bunch and some bunches ain't got any in 'em.”



Force has become part of our recreational activities.

Force can make things worse

Here are some perceptions of force that livestock may have in certain situations.

Force

A cow being sorted away from her calf or the herd would feel forced if we asked for speed and direction.

Riders are running and shouting behind the stock to get them through a gate.

Riders run up the left side of a herd to get them to turn right, blocking the left side.

“Busting” stock or making the wrong thing hard by running them off the creek bottom.

Getting stock started out of the corral or fence corner by leaving only one way open.

A sensitive first-calf heifer breaks back from the herd to look for a calf that was actually near her all along. You get mad, run out and block it and send the stupid animal back into the herd at a run, bowling over a few others as she hits the herd. Forcing it back might take only a minute or two, but you’ll have to do it again, because she won’t want to stay with the herd.

Let

Ask for just direction. Let the cow set the pace away from the herd. Quietly persist and soon she will go anywhere willingly.

Stock are handled first to give to pressure before pressuring them through a gate. They go straight ahead when pressured. Then riders move to the front and pressure so they can see what’s pressuring them at the gate. They decide to go because they can.

A line of people in proper position pressure one side and back off the other so stock will want to go toward the open side and turn. The open side is created when riders advance (i.e., up the left). Rider on the right stops or backs off so the stock want to turn right.

Gather them up comfortably and drive them with good movement so they want to go.

Start a herd going by allowing them to choose the direction. Set it up so they start moving.

You know the calf is in the herd so you go with the heifer, moving slower than she is until she stops. When she stops, you stop. You continue this until she’s quiet and her attention is on you. Then you ask her to turn toward the herd. If she doesn’t turn, you go with her some more and ask again until she is willing to turn. When you can get her to go anywhere you want quietly, return her to her calf in the herd.

Let the cow go back to the last place she thinks she left the calf. Once she has checked the spot and doesn’t find it, she will return to the herd on her own.

Letting stock

“Letting” stock means being in the right spot to encourage them to do what you want according to what is important to them, such as being in a place where they can see you and going through a gate as you pressure.

Let the stock decide what they want to do as they react to your pressure and release by positioning yourself, pressuring and moving so they will want to go that way.

If you’re not in the proper position to let them do something, then you’ll have problems. You have to be where the stock tell you that you need to be so they can do it. If you are out of position or moving wrong, the stock will show you.

Remember, too, that you need to accommodate the emotional needs of livestock by stopping the stuff that bothers and stresses them like loud noises, fast movements, crowding, and jamming.

While these things aren’t necessarily force, they distract them from being able to respond well to you. Ceasing to do these things will create an additional measure of calmness that will allow stock to be able to respond to correct pressure. No part of real stockmanship entails getting a job done by buzzing up the stock.

Stock are less stressed and more comfortable if they have two or more directions to go when pressured. Always try to give them that option, especially when first training. When stock are handling well, you make one way more open than the other.

Adjust what you are doing if stock need help doing some things that are difficult for them. If the lead animals slow or stop, work only a small area in the back, behind the lead. Work so you get close enough to get the lead going again. As the lead goes, pressure cattle on either side of

you to go. Turning up the heat across the whole back side will just shove the back into the middle. This sometimes happens when stock get balled up going up or down a steep hill or through a gate.

You can also stop pressuring the back when this occurs. Perhaps go up front and move the leaders with direct pressure first so the back and middle can have a place to go.

There will be times when stock know you want them to do something, and they just won’t want to—like going down a steep hill, moving off a creek bottom on a hot day, or getting off bedding on a cold one. In these instances, you might have to pressure until they realize a “no” answer produces continual pressure.

Accommodating emotional aspects

Observation and feel are important

When first handling animals, you’re working to get a feel for their perception of you. Are they scared of you? Unusually sensitive? Bullheaded to something you ask? Do they just move out of your way?

This determination must happen first before you can have any hope of charting the right course for getting them to handle well. Observation, moving properly, and perfect timing get them to do what they want to do.

Your attention, understanding, and consistency will produce calm, responsive and attentive stock. It only happens in that order.

Whether you are just getting your animals working for you or working some that already are, you must constantly watch. In the beginning, watch for signs of how they perceive you so you can change if you see the stock think you are rotten.

Later, watch to determine your effect on how they move and then change and adjust pressure as they either over- or under-react.

A good rider moves in, finds out how each thing he does affects them, and adjusts immediately if it doesn't work.

Change what you're doing at the first sign from an animal that it's worried about it—or isn't responding well to it. This might mean moving up so it can see you better. It might mean firming up pressure if it isn't trying or distracted. It might mean keeping up quiet, persistent pressure when necessary.

You should only create avenues for the cattle to choose. Let them choose to walk and stay with the bunch instead of run, turn, slow, or whatever you are asking. Make one way or one thing the best and more open than all the others. Set it up and wait until they can take the profitable direction. If the open way is more difficult, then you must help them do it.

When they choose the “wrong” thing, it is mostly because you didn't set up the situation well enough or they aren't relaxed enough yet to respond to take it. Getting the “wrong” thing means you either adjust what you're doing or start with them at another place in handling where you can start with more calmness.

If stock do the wrong thing like turn off the mountain trail and side hill, go with them. Let them do what they feel they should do at that time. Don't try to stop it. Set it up again but change how you do it so they will want to take it.

Then if they do this again, put on some pressure, not too firmly, and apply it so they put this pressure on themselves by choosing the wrong thing. Then help them go up the mountain trail, maybe by moving up to the front and pressuring into their sides or by leading them. If it's done right, they will choose to do it, and you will have a better handling herd for the experience.

Readiness in the cattle to do everything you ask must be sensed, not ignored, and never forced. This is important to the cattle.

If my horse is walking straight but I notice he keeps thinking left, I prepare so when he turns left, he immediately feels my right leg and some pressure on the left indirect rein. He perceives this as pressure he put on himself.

If I'm sorting a cow that is going straight but starting to think about turning left, I start moving left and am there when she moves left. She perceives this as walking or moving into her own pressure, and she can make her own choice about where freedom is. In almost no time at all, my choice becomes her choice, because she won't want to keep walking into pressure very long.

One day, I was working some steers that seemed “trained” to go a certain way (left through a gate) when gathered. But I wanted to place them in a different pasture to the right. I got them working for me fairly well and the drive going, but they would veer left towards this one gate. They were sure that was the way to go.

I went out wide to the left side to turn them away from it, and I could see that all but a few (the ones at the lead) would readily turn. The lead animals' eyes bugged a little. They stiffened and picked up the pace faster to get to that gate. I stayed out wide just a second more, but I could see that wasn't going to affect the change. They would feel forced, so I went back behind and encouraged the pace to continue.

In a minute I went out wide again, but the one in the lead still didn't want to turn. His eyes weren't bugged out so much this time, so I was winning. Coming in near the gate, I just let them go through. But they wanted to slow, so I kept them going up an alley way into a corral. Then I worked them around the corral, asking for turns, to speed up, slow, and stop. They soon got calm about all this. Then I drove them back out the gate to the fields.

I slowed and stopped them once we were a ways out the gate, then picked them up and started off towards the new gate and pasture that I wanted them in.

Now the lead steer wanted to go farther right than I wanted (back to another part of the pasture). I went out wide to the right and he turned just a bit, so I went back to working back and forth behind the herd. I quickly asked him to turn to the left again, and he did.

I went back (all the time watching him) and sure enough he was thinking right again, so I immediately moved right before he did. He walked into his own pressure (me being out wide before he turned) and turned back left. We practiced turns a few times. He was easy to drive from then on and went wherever I wanted. His attention was now on me and on what I would ask next, not on following the old pattern of moving as he thought he should.

I believe the turning point was when he walked into his own pressure. His past experience was that he should lead the way and speed up if riders went wide. His new experience was that turning away from pressure is profitable.

I never really get after any stock for not doing the right thing. They are doing as they think they should, so I just go along with them. I don't ever worry about them getting the best of me, because I don't look at it that way. Getting sore at them is a waste of energy. Quietly persist in working

them so the wrong thing appears not profitable. Make the right things an option they could take. Make it profitable for them. **That's all you need to do.**

I have confidence in what I can do and what cattle will do. In fact, I'm far more confident about what the cattle will do.

When I know they can load into a chute or trailer, there is never a doubt in my mind about what I'm asking for. I have no care when they do it, so there isn't anxiety in their minds about going in. They know that I mean what I'm asking because I've quietly persisted in getting it before. I've taken them places calmly, quietly, and comfortably so they have no fear of what will happen. They can always do what I ask and know there is an open way out.

Never try to change cattle. You don't have to try. And it doesn't work anyway. Trust the fact that stock want to get along with us, want to relieve pressure, want to go in the direction they are facing, want to see what's pressuring them, and want to be with the herd.

I always have a clear picture of what I want these animals to do, but **how they do it** is way more important. I don't care if they do what I had in mind. If they don't do it, and I was right the way I asked, they weren't ready. So we go back to something easier or simpler for them. When they are calm enough, I let them do it when they are ready. Don't ask if you don't think they will do it yet.

Cattle want relief and freedom more than anything. For this reason, never make the wrong thing too difficult. This will just scare them, and they won't believe that you aren't aggressive.

Make it clear that responding well to your handling means freedom from pressure. Once they understand this is **always the deal** between them and you, they will work for that momentary freedom. This is why you must always provide some relief in between requests.

Sometimes I pressure cattle against the back of the pen if I want them to go to the front. This helps them make the choice. I persist quietly with pressure to speed them up if they are going too slow. Then I back off a touch and follow up the movement. The whole herd knows I did this.

I sometimes stand between wherever I want them to go and where they are. This helps them see me and where to go. When you do things this way, they want to do whatever you want them to do. It helps them to do it.

When they are ready and really working well for me, then and only then can I focus on exactly what I want them to do. But still without ever caring, worrying, or being anxious about whether they do it, in case I've misjudged their readiness.

When I'm right in my handling, they will do it. I am 100 percent sure of this. This is the nature of the animal. This is the key. They are sure that pressure has a release and know they can do something completely natural in order to get the release, and they get the chance to work off less pressure.

Good handling requires intense focus and concentration on what the stock are doing and what I need to change, so I'm looking towards what they will do next. The only constant thing is that I keep changing the details of what I'm doing so it fits each and every animal. The thing I'm working on is fitting myself to a changing situation.

You must understand that handling stock is working your mind. In time, you can get their feet to work through their minds.

What the feet do before their minds have changed over to getting comfortable and trusting you isn't important. If you care about what the feet do before their minds are right, you miss the whole point. If the stock weigh anything you ask them to do, you haven't worked them enough to do these things or aren't asking right.

Becoming accomplished at good handling requires thinking, practice, and experience.

Good handling is based on how animals think. They are the teachers. The art to it is the feel and timing that you must gain in order to respond to changing situations and developing integrity with the animals.

You must anticipate some things happening and react before the stock do. You must believe them, and they must believe you are fair. This can't be fully taught. It has to be experienced. It is much like dancing with your partner—the more you do it, the better you get at moving well together.

What not to do

Because of the nature of livestock, there are some things that will help them listen to you. Just plain memorize these items and **don't do them!**

Don't...

- Yell, holler, or create loud noise.
- Pressure from directly behind for any length of time.
- Pressure from head on. Stock can't see you well when you're right in front, so work them only from the sides or at an angle to the neck or hip or go back and forth across.
- Shove or push (pressure then release only).

Mindset of a good rider

- Crowd them closely together or jam them into each other.
- Move fast or tear around when handling.
- Jump in front of them or spin them around.
- Work them from too far away.
- Walk or ride in curved lines.
- Work them when you're in a bad mood (attitude is everything).

Good handling involves not doing wrong things. The best horse trainers and livestock handlers do the fewest wrong things.

No one knows immediately how or where to start with new cattle, but they do know to get the feel of the stock so they can find the right things quickly.

Stock will move away from noise they find irritating. This has no place in stockmanship, so keep the noise down to the level of normal conversation and keep it non-aggravating. Cattle can hear sounds as much as 10 times fainter than we can.

When you whistle or yell at a couple of cows that aren't moving, you are also prompting the animals that are doing the right thing. The ones moving well are likely to try something else because noise applies to every one of them within hearing distance.

Excessive pressure that causes bumping and crowding in a herd is about as stressful as anything you can do. Change whatever it is you are doing to cause it. On the range, riders usually cause it by curving up the sides or shoving the back of the herd into the middle. Back at the corral, if you have a 10-cow pen, don't put 11 in it.

Fast moves or how fast you push stock heighten their stress level. Move them out at a good walk but don't get them running.

Don't chase the stock. The one exception is if a calf breaks back and you have to go get ahead of it.

When you're working the stock right, you shouldn't have to do much more than trot your horse in almost any situation.

Do the right things

- Keep the noise down.
- Work in and out of the flight zone when you want something. Get out of it if you don't.
- Work as close as you can.
- Be patient. Practice setting it up right, waiting, and giving it time to happen.
- Watch stock all the time to see the effect you are having on them. This allows you to move early and slower rather than later and faster.
- Always move in straight lines.

Animals need to know it's okay to do certain things like going around or by you through a gate or up a chute. It's the going by you, rather than going into the chute or through a gate, that often concerns them.

Let them go by and around you a few times so they know it's okay and realize you aren't going to over pressure or jump in front of them when they do.

As you prepare to work stock

Most cattle have some concern about people. Usually the first thing I do with a herd is to see if any of them view me as aggressive. I erase their fear or anxiety by asking for simple performance.

With good handling, even real sensitive animals that have been handled roughly will see that we back off when they show us they can't handle what we're doing. They understand we allow them some room when they are scared.

Keep your good herd boss status by not doing the wrong things and by doing at least a few things right. Good techniques, applied correctly, are the right things. You'll find out that you don't need to holler or chase them. The stock will appreciate that. So might your spouse. For sure your horse will.

Herds that are even moderately well handled show remarkable response to herders on the range. Some of these herders are so well accepted that the stock seem to just know what they want. These riders often just show up and talk. The pairs mother up, look for direction from the riders, then travel off to where they are encouraged to go. They even pause to look for direction from the riders during the drive when coming to a crossroad or turnoff.

Cattle that wait on your direction make it hard to stay humble, but it's enjoyable.

A very important point that has great influence on the stock but isn't easy to explain is this: If you want a cow to go through a gate, she turns up the hill.

If you really focus on the goal or the end you have in mind, the animals know it. Your concern about the gate creates concern in the stock enough that they can't do it. They get suspicious. So it's very important that you remain unconcerned about what happens. Just let it happen by working the animals until they will do it.

If you really care about getting an animal into the trailer, you probably won't get it to go in. If you don't get concerned or focus on it and don't care, they go right in.

One of the difficulties of handling stock well is what you learn about yourself. The change in attitude that must happen might take years. Unfortunately, this change is what you need the most when you first start, when even the most simple techniques are new to you. I don't know any way to teach this change. But it will happen when you see over and over again what a little belief, knowledge, and right frame of mind produces in the stock.

chapter seven

What your stock can and should do well

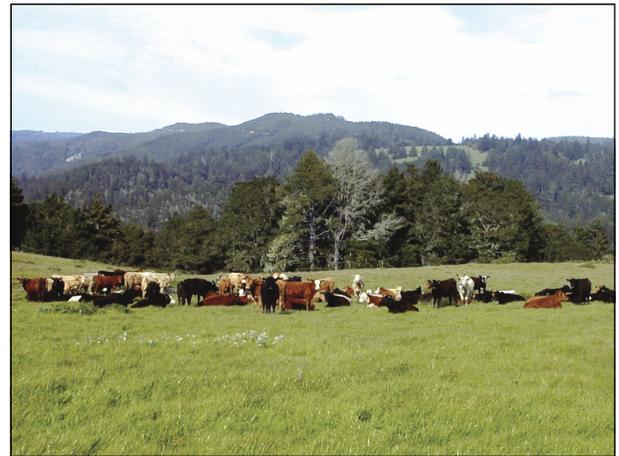
Well-handled cattle on the range will...

- Stay together as a herd
- Stay wherever you place them for at least a day or more; leave the herd, drink, and then return
- Drive well as a herd with a little training
- Drive mothered up if you have pairs
- Trail up and down steep hills readily
- Cross bridges, creeks, and rivers

By using the right techniques, calm cattle will also move, speed up, slow down, stop and turn predictably .

Stock should have a measure of calmness before asking them to do something and remain calm after working them. Good riders work towards calmness and check for it constantly. If they aren't calm, the handler should immediately take steps to obtain it before continuing the job.

Using proper techniques, apply pressure by moving just within the pressure zone. Release pressure immediately after the cattle do what you ask, either by them moving away or you easing off. This is their reward. They learn only from the quiet moment of time after the release of pressure that what they just did profits them or not. Which it is depends on when you release pressure **and** wait.



Well handled, well settled cattle.
Handled by Tim Westfall of Wells, NV.

What your stock can and should do well

Quit forcing stock, hollering and yelling around them. Walk or ride in straight lines. Always watch them and set it up right. Quietly persist and let them do it.

You must adopt this method fully or the stock won't give you full control, and you'll be stressing them. You must believe in this method and have confidence that it works from day one.

Remember that cattle want to see what is pressuring them, go in the direction they are facing, and follow good movement. They want to be in a herd.

Laying the right foundation

A good horse for stock work must be supple and light. It must perform solid stops, have highly controllable gaits and be able to back up, side pass, and half pass well, walk and trot straight, and turn very well. All this must be done calmly and precisely.

This doesn't happen unless the trainer builds a solid foundation step by step.

Although getting a herd working well for you is easier than training a stock horse, few people invest much time in gaining knowledge about cattle or building a foundation in their herds.

Yet it takes far less time to get 1,500 pairs working great than it does to get the average colt to work well. Of course, this depends on your level of knowledge and experience, but **nobody** produces a great stock horse from scratch in 30 days. You can have a remarkably calm and responsive herd in a far shorter time than that, even with an average skill level. Your attitude, belief, and dedication must be good, however, or your herd will never be very good.

Before cattle will stay where you put them, drive well, etc, they must first be calm and responsive to basic techniques. Working well for you means

they will do the steps, the foundation of the things that you will require of them on the range.

Before you go out on the range, you need to check your herd to see if it is calm and responsive to these simple steps. Every herd is unique and will react differently in changing situations.

Placing cattle successfully is usually a good test that you have worked them right on the way there. If you skip a step or two, do things that bother them, or if they are still single-minded, they probably won't stay. Not long, anyway.

The steps: What stock need to do well before taking them out on range

Because cattle want to see what's pressuring them, there are techniques that are naturally easier or harder for them to respond to calmly in the beginning.

Techniques that are applied at a sharper angle into their sides (meaning you approach from more towards their rump) make it more difficult for them to see you as you pressure and as they move away. It's harder for cattle to move calmly.

Cattle **should** naturally respond to more advanced (difficult for them to do) techniques and move calmly once they are taking basic pressure calmly. I like to make sure they are calm enough, rather than assume it, by checking them to see if they are good at all the techniques I will use.

Cattle may also have trouble with a particular technique or movement such as going up the sides because of past bad experiences or for reasons you may not know.

If a herd has a solid foundation, is responsive and calm to all techniques and then has trouble going up or down a steep hill, across a bridge or river, all that's required is for you to position yourself properly to help the cattle do it and quietly persist.

What your stock can and should do well

The point of all this pressuring or working stock is to change the mindset of the animals through experiences, step-by-step, so you can be sure they will be responsive to all handling techniques.

One exception is that stock need to be trained to drive well. They need to experience that going straight, going at a comfortable walk, and staying together in a herd is profitable so you can drive them effectively.

To ensure you have a solid foundation in the herd, you want all of your stock to do the following things calmly, consistently, and in about this order:

- Let you close enough to work them efficiently (half-mile flight zones are annoying).
- Move straight ahead at a comfortable walk when you direct pressure into their sides and keep going 20-30 yards.
- Slow down when you go up the sides with the direction of movement and stop when you go all the way past them.
- Speed up when you go by them against the direction of movement.
- Turn left or right when you pressure hips or the neck; when in a herd, turn when you go wide to the side from a position from the back.
- Be very comfortable going by you or other people. (I like every animal to be okay with me a maximum of three or four feet away from them, even in corrals or going through gates.)
- Drive well as a herd.

- Turn when one side is pressured to go faster than the other from a position from the rear.
- Go through gates, sort back at the gate and load into trailers well.
- Sort away from the herd readily with only quiet persistent pressure.
- Follow a horse and rider when they are driven toward them.
- Comfortable with being worked horseback or on foot.
- Move calmly away from herding dogs (if you work with them.)

I work my herds until they are consistently calm and responsive at doing each of these things, or until I'm sure they will do them. I test it further by asking them to do more difficult things well such as moving up and down steep hills and across water. They should also do these things when potential distractions are going on such as other people around, noise, etc.

Get straight movement first

You need to get movement in your stock so they can experience calmness about being handled (moving for you).

Start with moving straight ahead, which is easiest for most cattle. Don't try to turn an animal so it goes where you want. Just pressure so it can go straight, however it's facing.

When you have consistent straight-ahead movement, ask for good movement, which is a comfortable walk for that animal and one that will attract others to follow it.

What your stock can and should do well

Then ask them to keep going straight at a comfortable walk for as far as you desire. You will gain control over direction later. Stock need to be worked to be sure they will go, slow, stop, speed up, or turn. Always get calm, consistent results with each step of the training before going on to the next.

If you're having trouble getting the desired response from some animals, always go back to a place in training where you **can** get calm movement of some sort and build from there.

If you can pressure one animal from the side and it goes straight away with good movement, then fine. If you try another and it spins away or takes off when you get even 100 yards from it, then you must go back to the beginning training steps. You might reward (back away from) the animal just for not spinning off and running or for just moving its head in line with its body (a first step in moving ahead). When it's okay with that, go to the next step.

The idea of all this is to get the stock comfortable or unafraid of being handled and gain some practice and skill in handling them.

When animals consistently give you a "yes" answer in every step of handling, training is much more positive for them. Trust will build quickly.

When you take a step-by-step approach and end the lesson on a positive note, you can leave the animals during any part of the training and come back later to pick up just about where you left off.

Experience with handling helps get the right approach more quickly, but there are some approaches to keep in mind until this experience is gained.

The most basic level to start training might be required with cattle that run wildly at long distances from us or have decided to fight us. They

have been pushed or stressed to the point where they feel all avenues are lost except to fight or flee.

The starting point with these animals is to show them you aren't aggressive and won't do the things that bother them. You need to approach un-aggressively, ask for the simplest thing they can do, then release pressure and relax for a time.

Steps in loading

The task of getting a cow into a trailer calmly breaks down to these steps:

Since sorting and loading is a more advanced thing for the cow to do than just going straight ahead in a field or through a gate, handle the cow so it is good in the field or corral first.

Do this by practicing and asking her to move ahead a number of times, speed up, slow down, and turn until all responses are comfortable and automatic. You can do this on the range while taking the animal to the trailer.

Pressure to get this animal into a trailer now isn't force, because now it will want to move ahead straight with good movement when you pressure it to.

If it doesn't go willingly into the trailer, it means you haven't taught the animal well or practiced enough so it is sure of how to relieve pressure. So take it around again and practice applying and releasing pressure for it to go, turn, and speed up until she is convinced she can respond calmly and naturally and nothing scary happens.

Continue working with the cow to get it better and better at responding until it is so comfortable with you that the trailer is no big added pressure. Inside the trailer becomes the place to be, because outside of it means you keep asking it to do something.

chapter eight

Techniques that help build trust

The techniques in this chapter will help you take advantage of stock's natural tendencies to respond to certain movements from you or your horse. They take advantage of some of the more important traits of cattle that you must take into account whenever handling them:

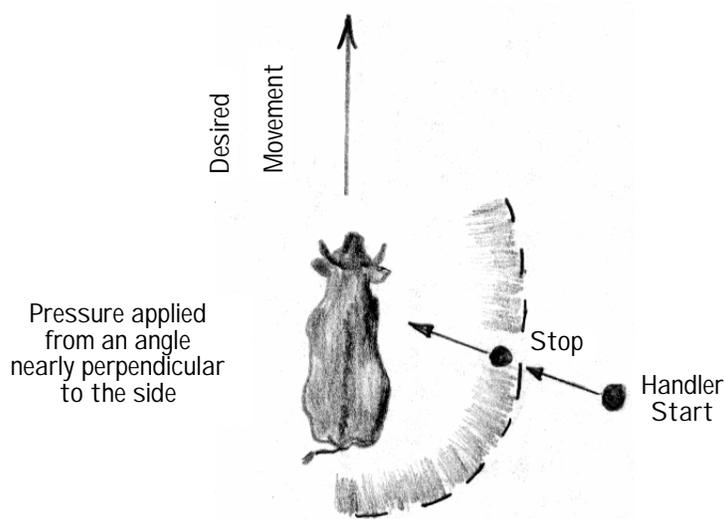
- Cattle want to see what is pressuring them.
- Flight zones lengthen or shorten depending on the situation.
- Cattle want to go in the direction they are facing.
- Cattle want to go around us, and we want to go around them.

Diagrams

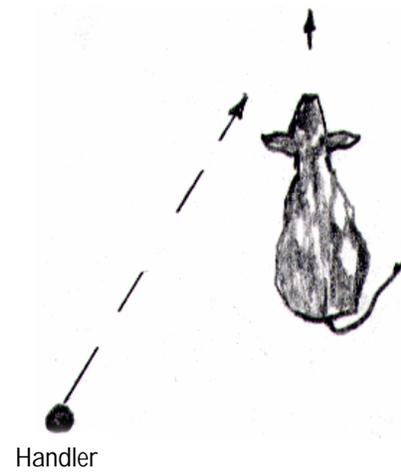
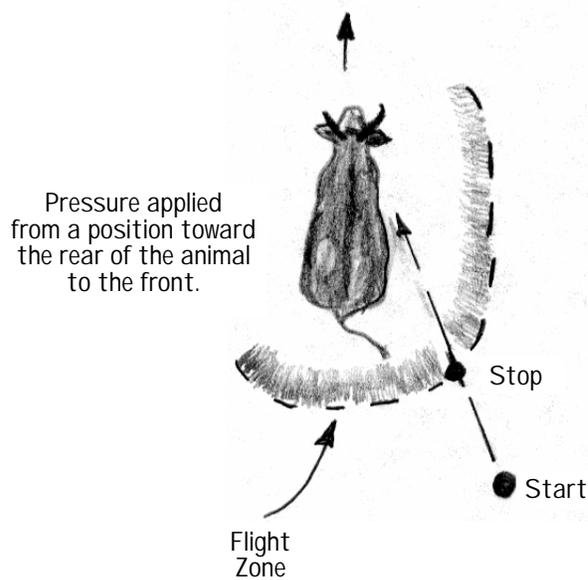
- Train stock to take pressure from the sides and the back
- Turn stock by pressuring the hip
- Turn stock by pressuring the neck and head
- Let stock slow by going up the sides
- Train stock to be comfortable going by you and move ahead as you go by
- Turn stock by moving out to the side
- Starting a herd—train a herd out on pasture or range to pick up movement and start moving as a herd
- Starting a herd—trained or calmer animals in fenced pasture or corner of corral
- Starting a trained herd to go in a desired direction
- Letting stock slow down by zig-zagging in front
- Driving a calmer herd, zig-zagging behind
- Working a herd with more than one handler, keeping a herd going straight
- Working a herd with more than one handler, turning it right
- Working a stalled-out herd (calmer herd)
- Moving a herd through a gate

TRAINING STOCK TO TAKE PRESSURE FROM THE SIDES AND THE BACK

OBJECTIVE — To move the animal forward and be comfortable with pressure applied to the side from different handler angles of approach.

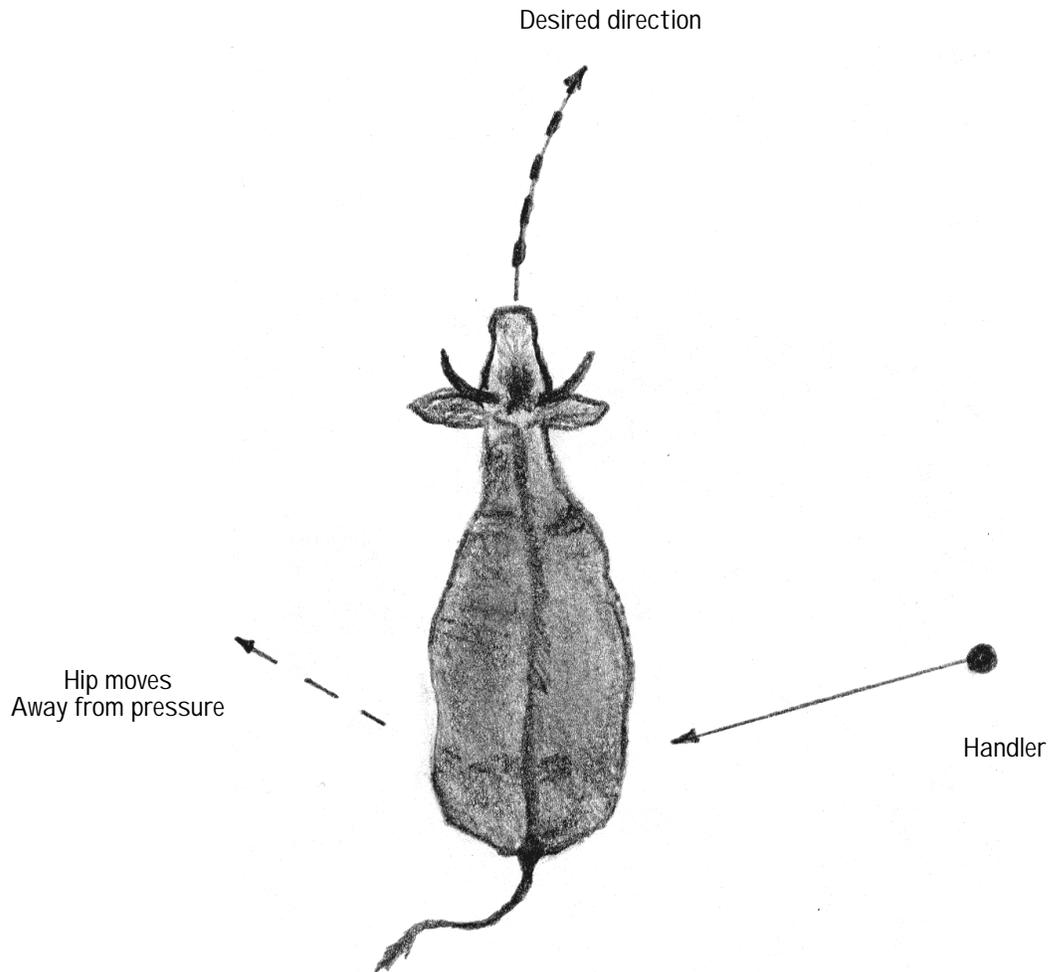


• NOTE:
When animals are moving, lead them (aim out in front) with your approach...



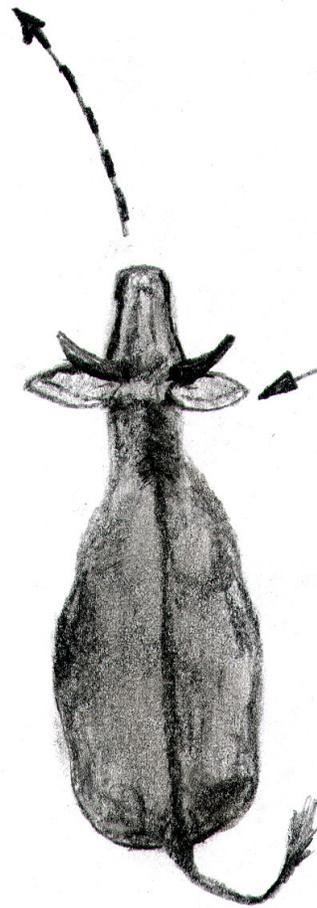
...otherwise you will end up pressuring too far back near the hip, which will turn the animal.

TURNING STOCK BY PRESSURING AT THE HIP



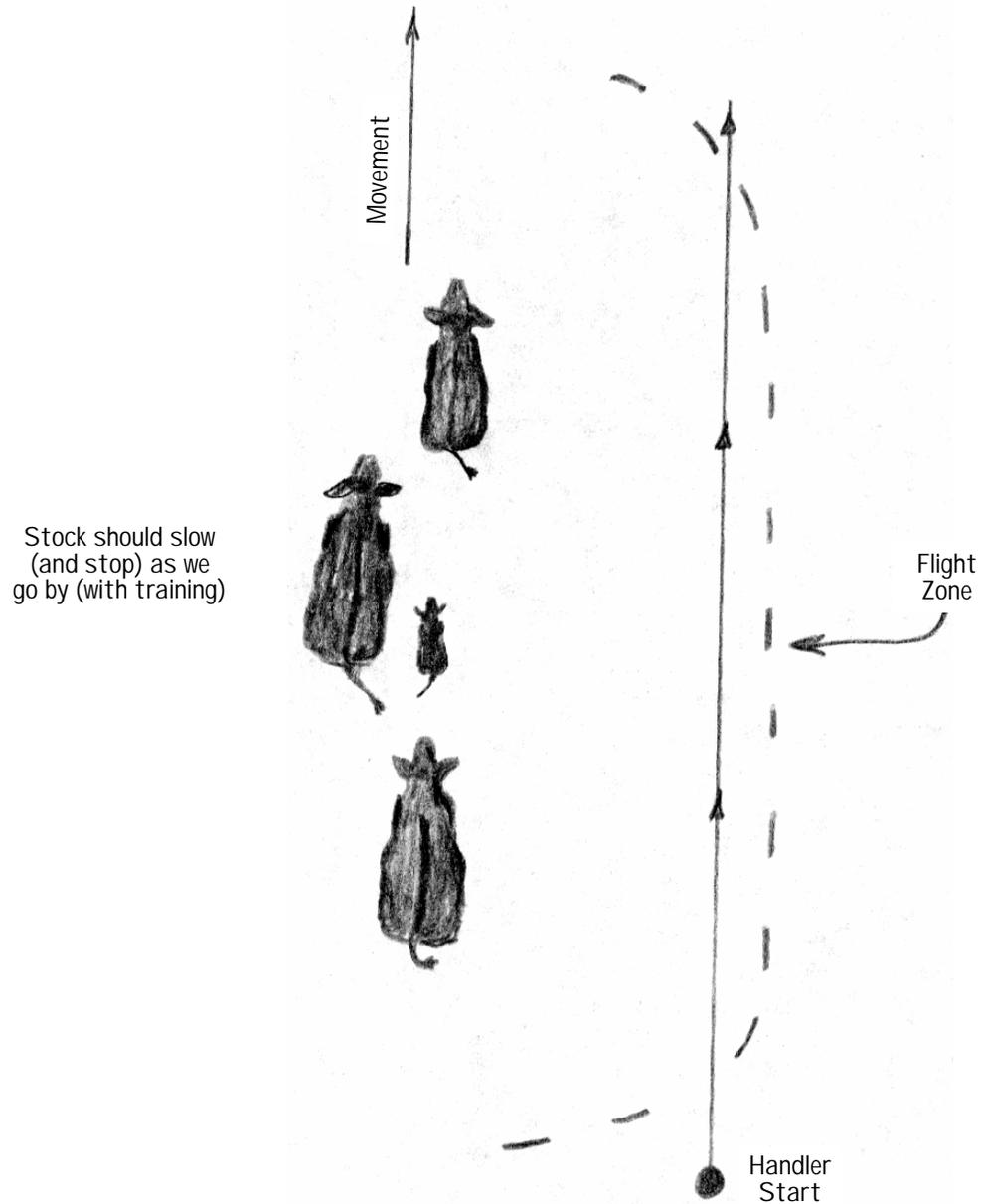
TURNING STOCK BY PRESSURING AT THE NECK AND HEAD

Desired direction

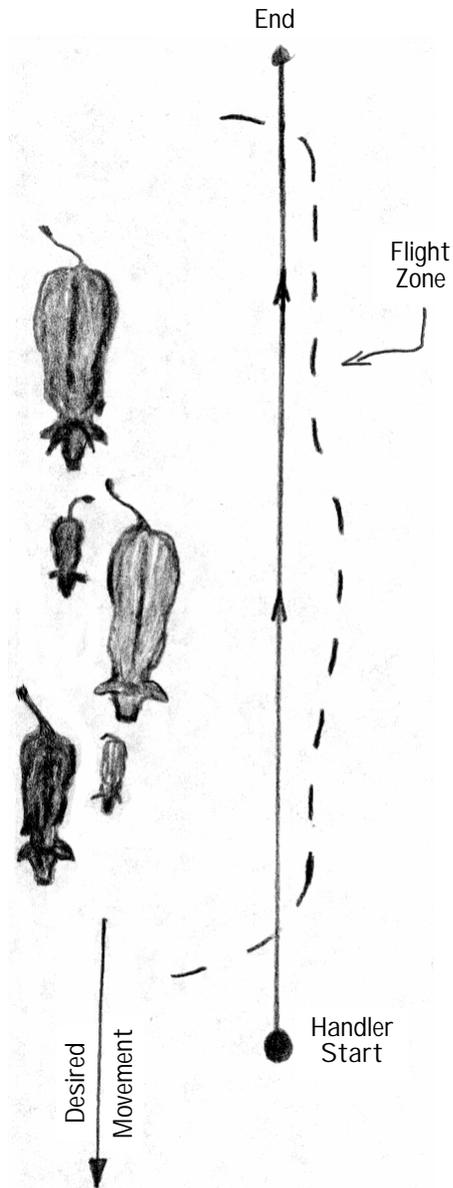


Handler Pressure

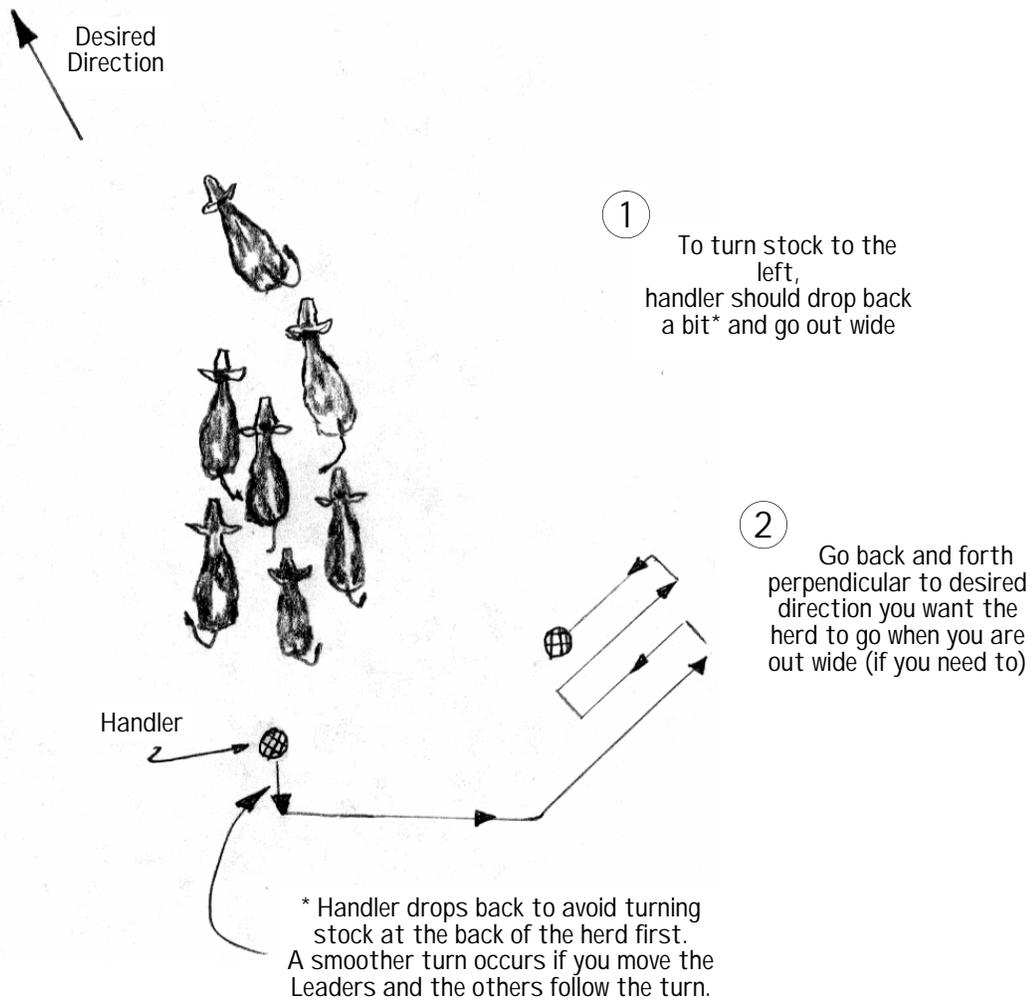
LETTING STOCK SLOW DOWN BY GOING BY THEM IN THE SAME DIRECTION THEY ARE GOING



**TRAINING STOCK TO BE COMFORTABLE
GOING BY US AND MOVE AHEAD
AS WE GO BY (Speed Up)**



TURNING STOCK BY MOVING OUT TO THE SIDE



STARTING A HERD — TRAINING A HERD OUT ON PASTURE OR RANGE TO:

- Pick Up Movement
- Start Moving as a Herd

On a Herd that is Mothered Up (if they are pairs) and Grouped

Calm Herd
(Average Animals)

(A) Pressure direct into the sides of a few animals— get good movement— others will follow. Just pick a few and get them going.

Or

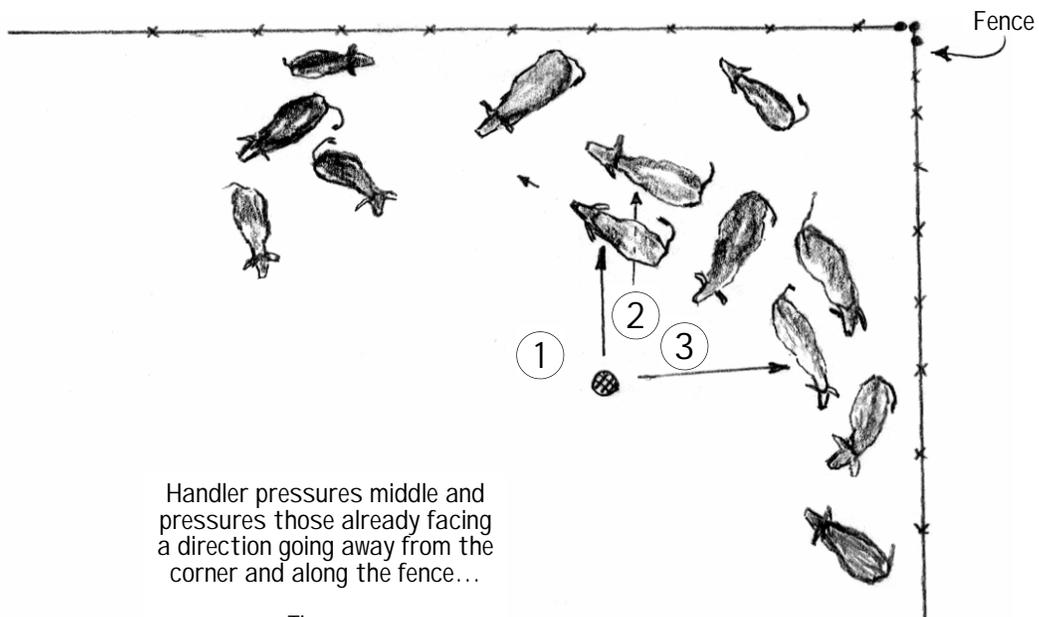
(B) Walk straight lines back and forth.

(Do this technique if direct pressure gets too much movement.)



STARTING A HERD

Trained or Calmer Animals in Corral or Fenced Pasture



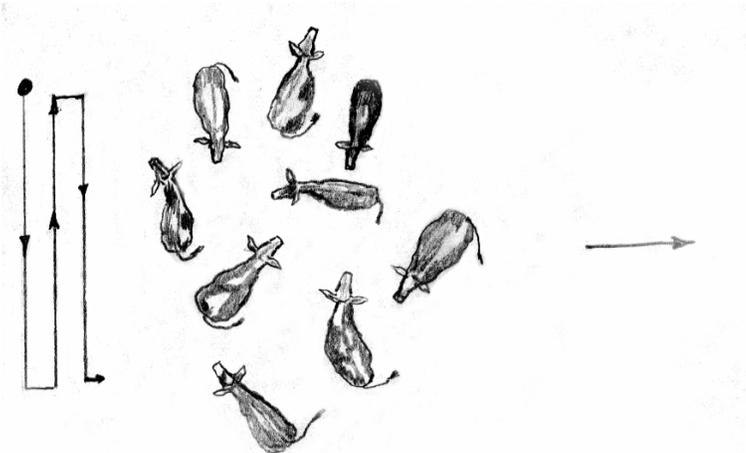
Handler pressures middle and pressures those already facing a direction going away from the corner and along the fence...

Then...

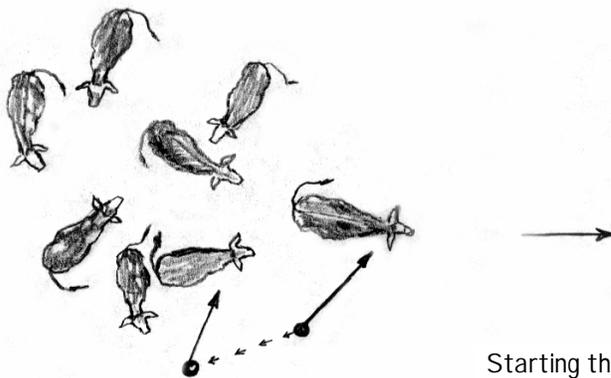
See which direction the stock take out and go with that (handler can move into the corner and behind stock to drive.)

STARTING A TRAINED HERD TO GO IN A DESIRED DIRECTION

Straight lines
perpendicular
to desired
direction.



Direct pressure
at the sides
if some animals
are facing the
right direction.

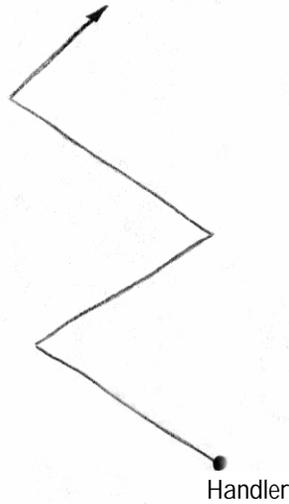


Starting the lead—
Get these going,
Others will follow.

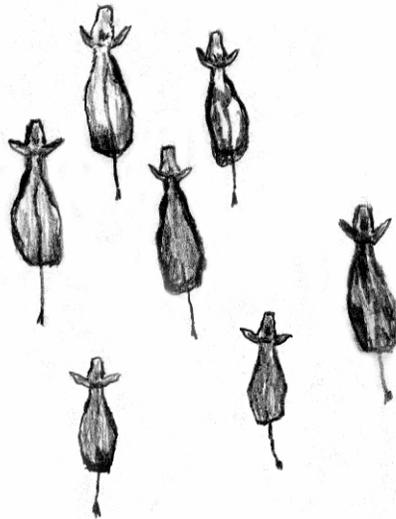
LETTING STOCK SLOW DOWN BY ZIG-ZAGGING IN FRONT OF THE HERD

Use this technique on
a herd that is going
too fast when you want
them to know it's OK
To slow down.

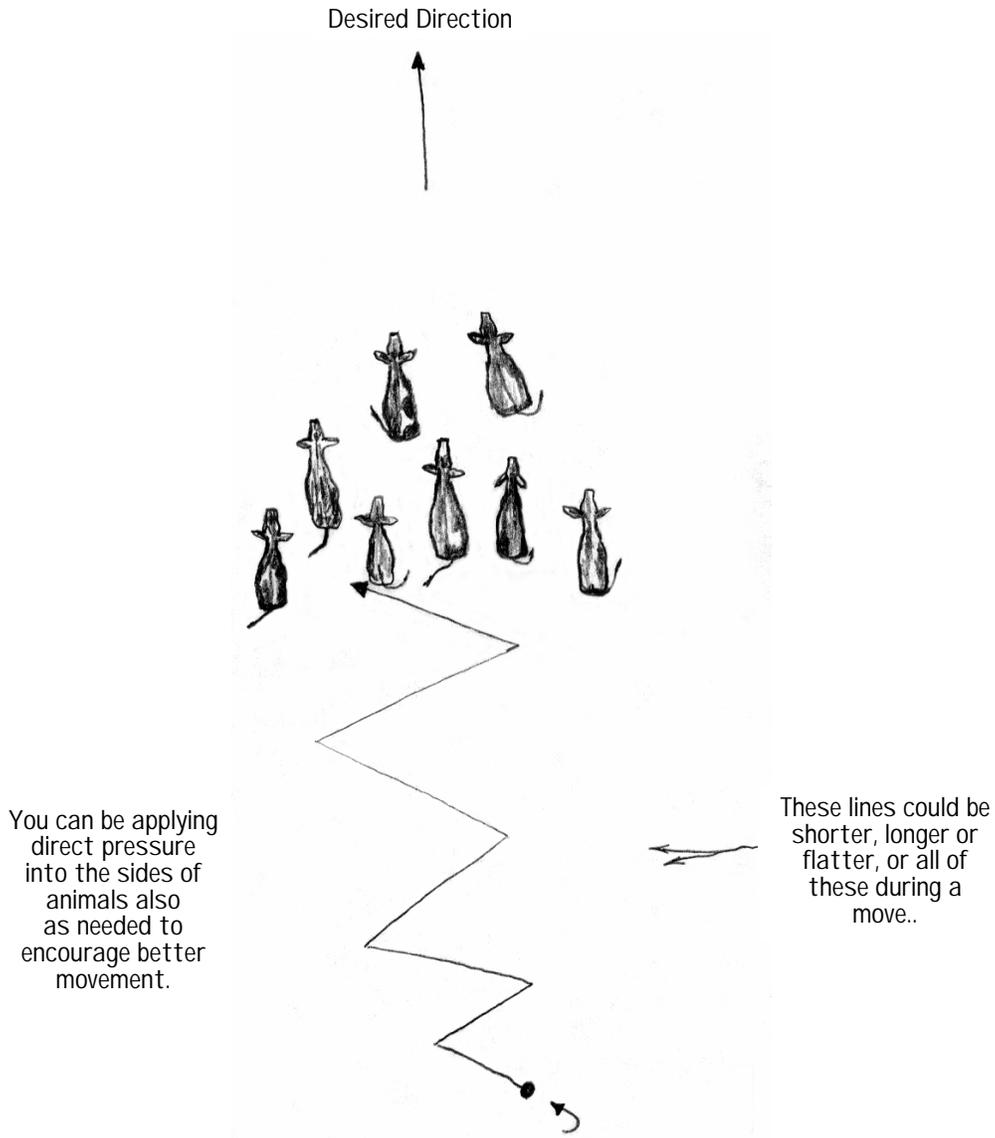
(Try backing off pressure
from behind and going
up the sides first.)



Stay well ahead
of the leaders,
just zig-zag ahead
until the herd slows.



DRIVING A CALMER HERD



WORKING A HERD WITH MORE THAN ONE HANDLER KEEPING A HERD GOING STRAIGHT

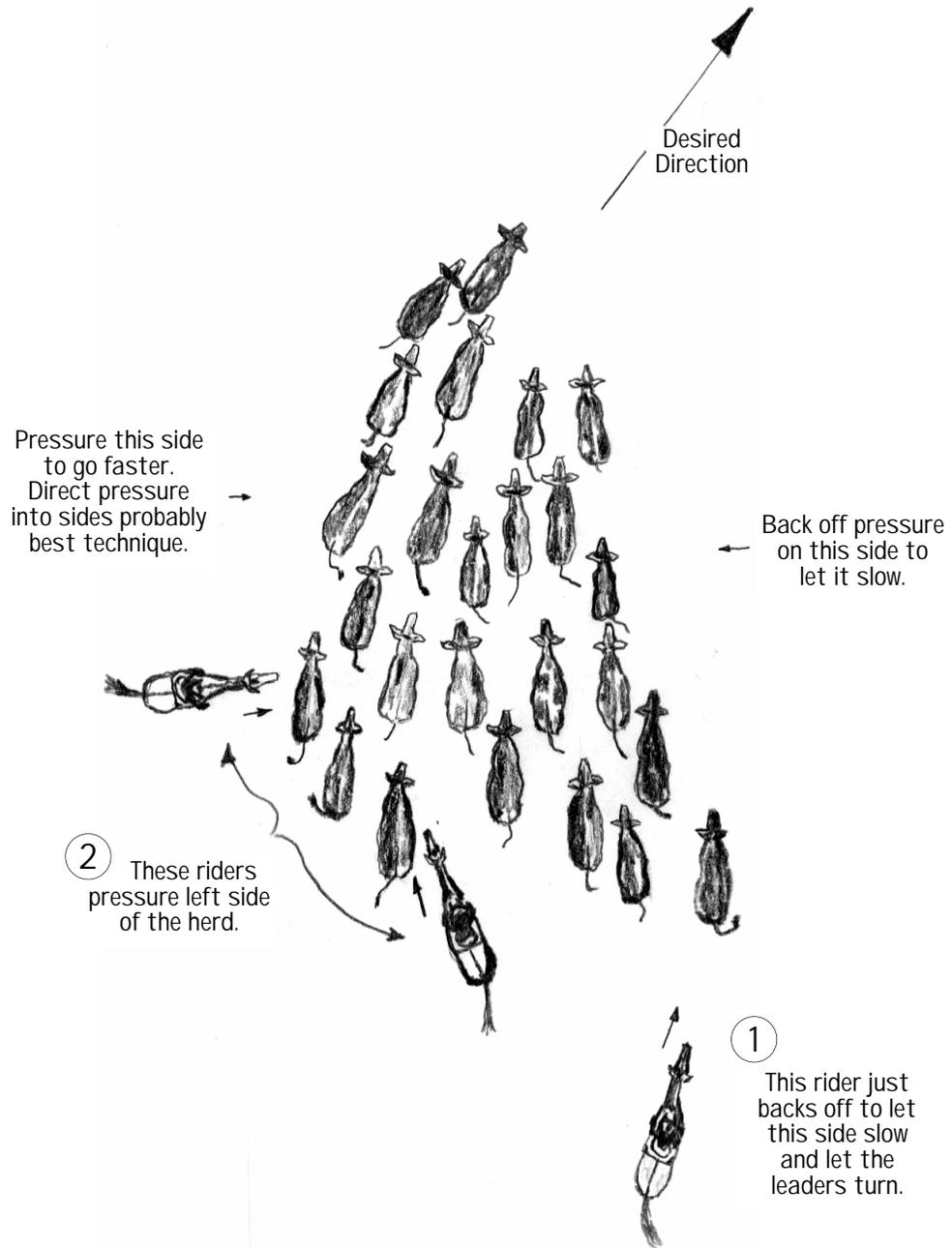


All handlers should keep line up perpendicular to desired direction. Outside riders control (guide) direction, middle rider gets and keeps movement..

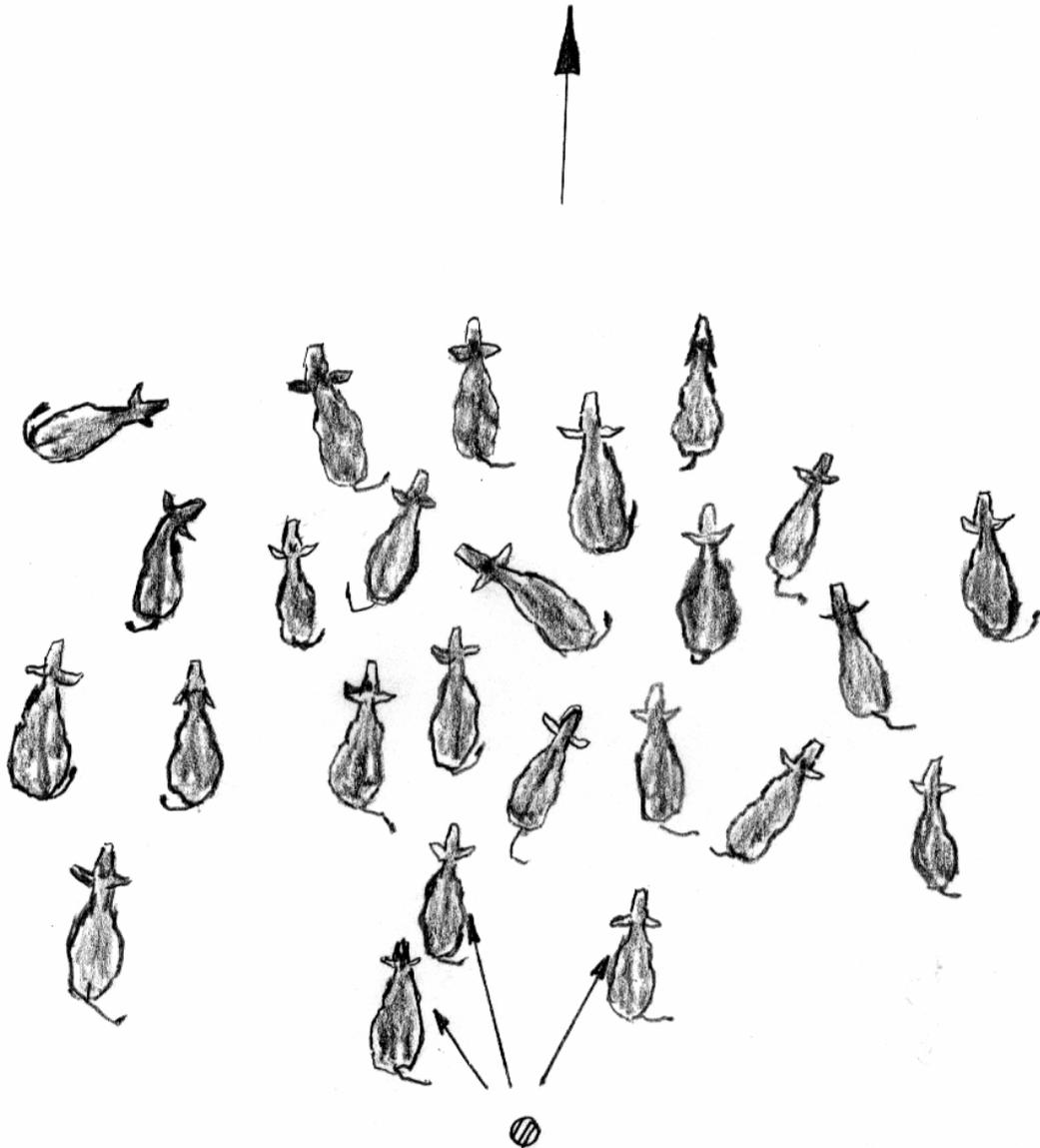
To keep stock going, all handlers should run straight lines behind or pressure into the sides when working behind.

AVOID JUST FOLLOWING STRAIGHT BEHIND THE HERD

WORKING A HERD WITH MORE THAN ONE HANDLER TURNING A HERD RIGHT

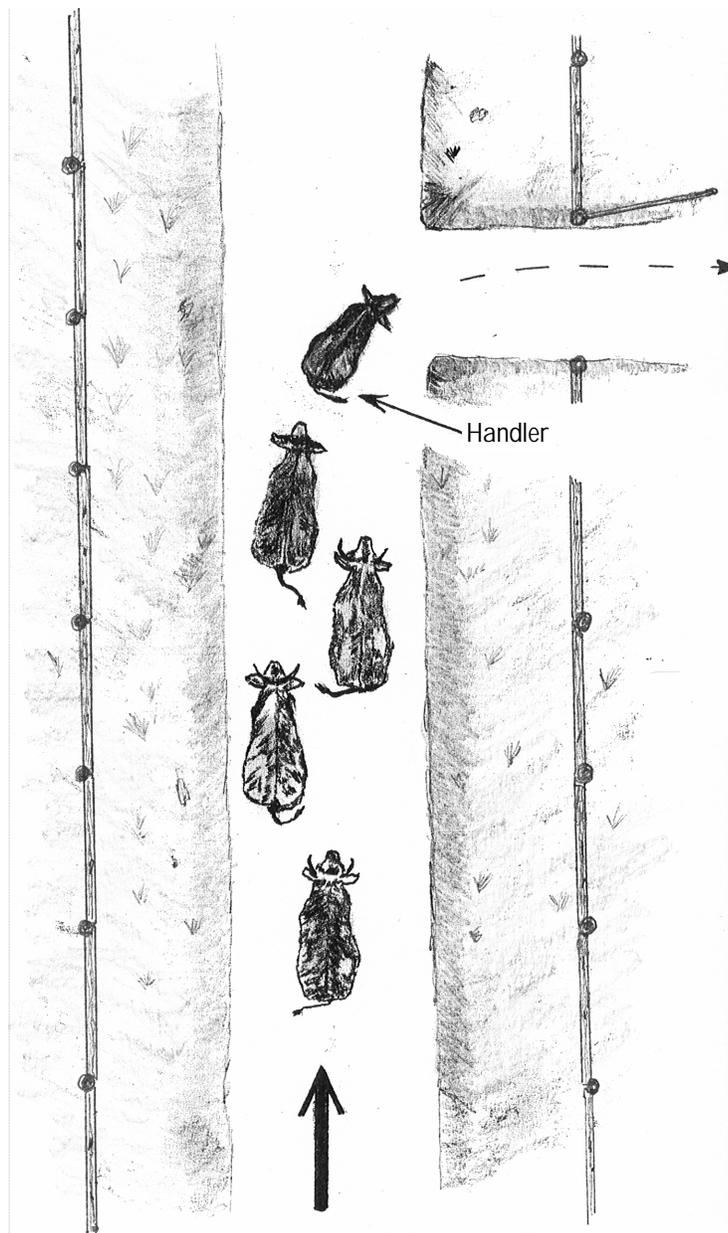


WORKING A STALLED OUT HERD (Calmer Herd)



Handler should direct pressure the middle portion of the herd only, until whole herd picks up good movement, then go to straight lines behind or direct pressure across the whole back of the herd.

MOVING A HERD THROUGH A GATE



Pressure hip of lead animals. Step back after they turn to let others come.

Once the lead is going through, direct pressure into their sides to speed them up, if necessary.

chapter nine

Before heading out on the range

Green riders shouldn't ride green horses. That's a recipe for wrecks.

Don't expect that you'll be able to gather and pull a large herd together and place them on the range unless the herd has been well handled first. Use the techniques in Chapter Eight to get the herd calm and responsive. You will also need to practice with the cattle so you can learn to pressure and position yourself properly.

This initial herd work and practice should take place in an appropriate place. Don't hamstring yourself by having to learn **and** do it on the side of a mountain.

How long it takes to get cattle good enough to turn out on the range depends on how roughly they have been handled in the past, how sensitive their dispositions are and the experience and dedication of the current handler.

It's better to try a technique at first that gets less of a reaction rather than one that causes over-reaction. Build up slowly while you're learning. You can always shift up to a more direct, higher-pressure technique or change your speed and angle if you need too.

Stock behavior, body language, and movement will tell you what is just right for the situation.



Take time to talk before heading out on the range. *Photo by Linda Hestag.*

Before heading out on the range

As you start working the herd, approach stock carefully and at a flat angle, assuming they are apprehensive or fearful of being handled. Watch them as you approach and then determine where you need to start and what technique might be appropriate.

The most sensitive animals determine which technique and approach to take. Otherwise, they will take off and spook the others, and getting them working will take a lot longer.

Some basic rules

First, a few common sense rules as you begin working stock.

Work the stock in an easy place. Approach carefully, building up to more pressure as they show they will accept it calmly. Get them good at all techniques before taking them on range.

Also change what you are doing if:

- It isn't safe for you.
- It isn't safe for the animals. You might have some injuries if stock start climbing the chute walls or panic going through gates.
- The stock aren't calmer and more responsive after a training lesson or handling than they were before. New stock should improve rather quickly when you're handling them right. Stock that are working well for you should stay that way.

If any of these things happen—or you suspect they are about to—change what you're doing.

Ask an experienced handler for help if you can't figure out what you're doing wrong or if you have aggressive stock and don't feel safe about it. Don't risk a wreck for you or your horse.

Strategies for getting animals calm and responsive

Two basic strategies are effective for getting animals to respond well to handling.

Strategy one: Work every animal in the bunch as an individual until each one accepts basic pressure calmly and responsively. This way, you can know that all the stock will at least go straight when you pressure them as a herd.

Once stock are good with the basics, teach them to drive and work well as a herd. This is also a good way for you to gain experience and ensure you've checked all the stock for calmness and responsiveness.

Stock being fed on hay fields or corrals is usually an adequate set up. If you feed hay during the winter, most get fairly calm with people around them.

Work pregnant cows well before they calve. Then work the calves when they are old enough.

Pick a time when the stock aren't feeding, thirsty, or otherwise distracted. Put them in a big corral if you like. This way if you make a mistake—and you will—you won't have too far to go to get them.

Strategy two: Start working stock as a herd on a larger pasture without working every individual first. This is potentially more difficult for someone just learning, especially on rough or brushy pasture or range. There is more potential for some sensitive animals to overreact and take off, spin around, or go a long ways away.

Whichever strategy you chose to use, I recommend you start working stock on foot, even if you ride a stockhorse. You will probably have to work on foot sometime, so learn to walk and

pressure in straight lines. Walking a straight line when working stock isn't as easy as you might think and requires some concentration and practice.

Riders without a horse to help them go get their mistakes somehow seem to be a bit more careful about how they work the stock initially. Light, supple stockhorses are uncommon, so graduate to horseback once you get skilled on foot and after your horse becomes highly obedient and calm.

Don't try to train a colt to work cattle by working sensitive cattle that aren't calm about being handled. If you can't control the horse to be as precise as you are on foot, I recommended you read the book by Charles O. Williamson and study the tapes by Ed Techick of Arco, Idaho (see References for details).

Work individual animals

I prefer to get a herd ready for turnout by handling each animal until I see calm responses to every technique.

Once all the individuals in a herd are good to handle, I switch to working them in small groups or altogether. I want them to experience that staying and driving well together as a herd, turning, speeding up, slowing, and stopping is profitable.

If you can approach animals within a reasonable distance, start checking individual animals to see how they take proper pressure. Work them to go straight. Pressure individuals hanging around, whatever direction they are facing. If a lot of them are facing the same direction and you start pressuring some into their sides, you might start a drive, which isn't what you're working for here.

Calmer stock can usually take some direct pressure from an angle off to their sides so they can easily see you when they move a few yards ahead. Instructions for how to do this are contained in this chapter (see page 87).

Work each animal to see if they all slow when you go up the sides with the direction of movement and speed up when you go against the direction of movement.

When slowing them, keep going by to see if they all stop when you get past. Back off a ways and see if they are standing still and calm. They also need to turn well, left or right.

Once they do all this calmly and consistently, you can think about putting them together and teaching them to drive as a herd, to go through gates, speed up, slow down, turn, and stay put.

Working groups

The second set-up I use to get animals to respond well to handling is to start working a group or even the whole herd. I do this on the range a lot, because I usually need them to be working for me by dark.

You can get a group of animals to understand that pressure has a release and that you aren't going to be aggressive by drifting them as long and far as it takes for this to happen. When they are calm, you can then switch to teaching them to drive well, turn as a herd, etc.

Doing it this way, however, means you don't have the chance to practice the techniques and principles in an easy place and at a leisurely pace. More sensitive stock will undoubtedly take off running or take side trails. Calves will run back, etc. Some cattle in the middle of the bunch might not be quite as calm about handling as you will want. This can be overlooked when moving a big herd.

If you have cattle that are real sensitive like those on the range might be, don't start out with direct pressure into their sides. You must use the instructions on getting closer to sensitive stock (see pages 37 and 92).

Before heading out on the range

How to handle aggressiveness

Watch for signs of aggression when you first approach stock. Don't ignore or tolerate it. Bad handling caused it, and good handling will correct and prevent it from reoccurring.

Modern beef breeds are not, by nature, inclined to fight first. Some of them will fight, but unless they are inflicted by a rare and tropical disease, they only do so based on past experiences that created the reaction that they should fight.

Beef cattle won't fight if they view you as non-threatening and you are boss of the herd.

Some yearlings will bawl and run at you if you back off too many times when first handling them. You can stop this by squaring up with them or, if you have to, by raising an arm or your hat. They will squeal and turn away.

If you see indications of real aggression and don't know how to handle it safely, get out of the situation. If you can't, back off of what you were doing just a bit, but stand firm (unless they are going to follow through with the charge).

When the aggression is over, determine what caused it and how to correct it. It might be safer to put the stock into a place where it's safer to work them. In a corral, you might want to work them from outside the corral. If you are on pasture or range, you may want to work on a good stockhorse instead of on foot.

Carefully ask the aggressive animal to do something very simple, like just look at you. Approach (pressure) its head and when it looks at you, release the pressure and wait. Wait longer than you think you should. If it looks away, pressure again, until it looks at you. Then back up and wait a minute. If the animal looks away, apply just a bit of pressure. If it looks back at you, relax and quit pressuring.

It should get the message real soon that you aren't aggressive, and that it can control pressure by looking at you and then by continuing to look at you. This is the start of getting aggressive animals to experience that they can work for you and that it profits them to do so.

From there, if it's getting the idea, you can ask the animal to take a step forward. When it does, back off and wait. Progress from there, carefully rewarding positive responses until thoughts of fighting are gone.

If you cause aggression by pushing an animal too hard or in too small a space, correct it by going back to simpler, step-by-step requests. It will forgive this mistake quickly. Work in a bigger space if necessary.

In all the animals I've worked, I've had only two that tried to fight me. It was my fault in both cases.

I've had only one animal persist in trying to run me over in spite of using all the tricks I knew. It was a mother cow that came charging out of a bunch that I was just approaching to start working. I was on the range, and the other rider was just going over the crest of a hill when it all started. He was ponying my horse to the trailer to get us fresh horses while I worked these afoot. He also had the dog.

The cow started to charge, and since I was pretty sure she would follow through, I just stood firm. As she got close, I stuck out my hat in her face and moved to the side.

I eventually kept her from charging by driving other cows at her, but it took getting horseback again to stop it. On a good horse and now with a dog, I ached to teach her a real lesson, but I didn't. I was supposed to be helping the crew learn about stockmanship, placing a herd, and setting a decent example. I was quite sure she had rabies or some sickness that affected her mind (but not her stamina).

I guess the moral of this story is, stuff happens and getting mad with animals that can't reason is fairly pointless. You don't win a thing.

Don't shove

Shoving stock can create unwanted behavior.

Many people get pokey stock going or catch cows in the riparian area and then "shove" for good measure to keep them going.

Shoving means you pressured, they did the right thing (moved straight ahead), and then you pressured them again while they were doing it. This is the wrong thing to do.

You can't tell them to move twice in a row and expect it to have more meaning to them. Instead, it will have a different meaning.

If the time interval between two or more pressure cues is too short, the stock interpret this as continual pressure (the same lesson) and then try something else to relieve the pressure. They think, "Hey, I moved off but the pressure is still coming," so they do something else like speed up.

**Individual animals—
taking basic pressure explained**

Pressure into the side (Diagram page 68)

Start working an individual animal to respond well to pressure by pressuring into its side. Approach straight into its side at an angle behind the shoulder a bit and towards the front ribs.



Work it first in a big enough area so you can step in and out of the flight zone if possible. If you're working in a small corral, you may already be in the flight zone. This isn't wrong necessarily, but here you will need to work the animal so it will learn or trust that you will only come so close.

As you approach the animal, you will probably make the unavoidable mistake of moving too close (to find the working flight zone distance), and the animal may move off too fast.

Approach again and use this "mistake" to make a mental note of the flight zone distance so you don't move in too close. Watch the animal carefully for signs it is going to move or not.

Before heading out on the range

Once you've found the zone on a herd or individual, then work just in and just out on the edge of the flight zone. Some beginning handlers move farther back out than they need to and waste motion. Work right on the edge.

The average animal should move straight ahead in the direction it was facing as a result of direct pressure on any place on its sides (ribs).

The only real bad places to pressure cattle are from directly behind or ahead of them. You can follow from far behind or lead them from directly ahead, but don't pressure them from these locations for any length of time.

In general, you can tell if you're too much directly behind or too far away if the animal turns to see you.



This calf shows that the rider is too far back or too much directly behind.

If it does, get closer, move back and forth, or move up toward the front and pressure from there. If you can see any part of the animal's eye, it can see you. Make sure whenever you pressure that you can see its eye.

Start handling calmer animals by pressuring from an approach angle near the front. This is easier for the animal to do, because it can see you easily as it moves straight ahead.

When the animal moves, all you're asking for at this point is to move a step of two. When it does, quit pressuring (release) and give the animal a few steps (end the lesson). Get yourself out of the flight zone or let the animal move itself away to relieve pressure.

Although the following steps are a more complicated approach than you usually need, you may run into some sensitive animals that require all or some of these.

Going away straight is actually comprised of the animal...

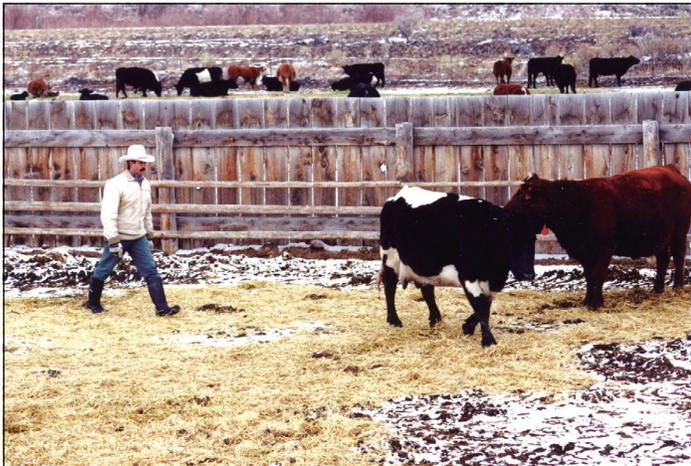
1. Being calm enough to stand and allow you to pressure its side effectively from a reasonably close distance.
2. Move its feet when you pressure.
3. Move its feet consistently when pressured.
4. Move its feet consistently and go straight ahead.
5. Do all this consistently and with good movement.
6. Do all this with good movement and keep going for a long enough distance to attract others to go with it.

Once you understand the mechanics of moving straight ahead, you can start training a particularly difficult animal at step one and get her good at that level before moving on. If you get a poor response at any level, go back to practicing whatever you can get her to do well before going on again.

Pressure into the side-from an angle nearer the tail (see diagram on page 68)

From pressure applied toward the front, you now have an animal that walks straight ahead with good movement and keeps going far enough to attract others to follow consistently (and prompts her to keep going).

Now, approach the animal from a sharper angle from its rear and pressure toward the shoulder and head. This pressure is a little harder for the animal to be comfortable with because it is harder for it to see you, both on your approach and after it leaves. But it needs to be okay with this. Do this until it walks straight ahead and at a good pace. If it slows too soon, immediately pressure again and it should move right out, even at farther and farther distances away from you.



You can also use this technique to increase the flight zone on animals that don't think they should keep moving very far.

When first pressured, an animal may jump out and not move straight. This tells you it is very concerned about seeing you and waited while the pressure built up too much. It hasn't experienced enough times that you aren't aggressive and doesn't understand what it can do to relieve pressure.

Approach a little more carefully the next time, ask a little lighter, and see if you can get it to go more calmly. Do this a few times until it is walking out straight-ahead with good movement.

Good movement is a comfortable walk for the animal but a pace that attracts others to join in.

In the case of stock that just get out of your way and then slow or stop, you've created the problem by ceasing pressure and ending the lesson after they just moved ahead a little without following up.

Cattle get calm quickly when handled without force. But if you want a drive, don't let them think that moving ahead a few feet is all they need to do. Prevent this from happening early on in handling. As soon as stock move comfortably from your pressure, teach them they must go and keep going a reasonable distance. Set a "keep going" distance that's far enough to allow you time to get some other animals going with good movement.

With those that just move to let you by, pressure them to go and keep going with good movement. Watch them carefully. Stick with any single animal that does this until it moves out well and keeps moving. Herds (and horses) that do this get the dander up on riders like almost nothing else. Just as they get the idea of slowing, come at them from the side, pressuring firmly before they slow or stop. Your timing must be good. Square up and come right into their sides if you need to.

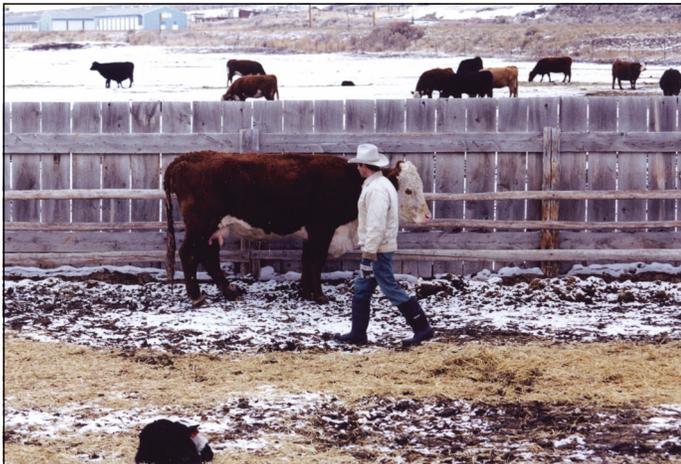
You may have to repeat this a time or two until they move away from you at longer distances and keep going long enough to attract others to go with them. Pretty soon you'll notice a slow poke wanting to slow, and all you have to do is turn towards it and it will move right out.

Before heading out on the range

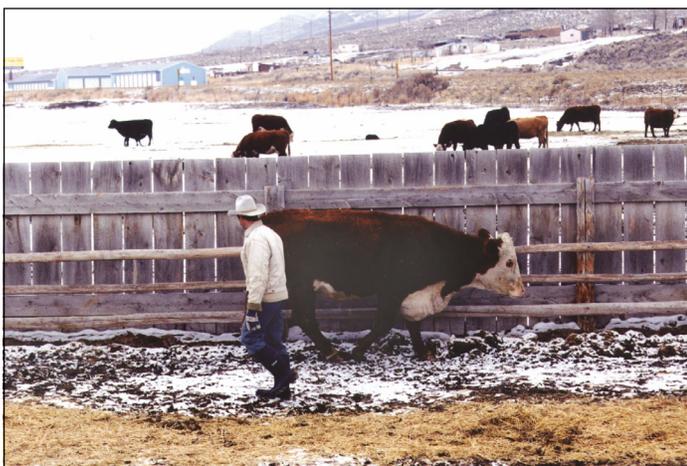
You are done with this lesson when all the animals respond consistently to your pressure at various angles into their sides and move out at a good walk, in the direction they were facing.

Going by you—starting or speeding them up (see diagram on page 72)

Let your stock experience that it's okay to go by you by approaching them from the front and off to one side a bit just within the flight zone and walk toward the back. Go right straight by it.



Walk straight by



Cow should walk straight ahead with good movement

The cow should go straight ahead with good movement if it was standing still—or speed up if it was already moving by. It should react by moving straight on by you when you get near its heads and shoulders. If it peels out or spins off, you need to repeat this until it is quite relaxed with it. You may need to move a little farther out or go slower.

When moving animals, remember always to allow them to get out of the flight zone when pressured or to get yourself out of it, or both. Resist the urge to send them on their way when they are going right.

Now that your stock know that it's okay to respond calmly to pressure into the sides and go by you, they will respond better to handling in the field—and to anything else you cue them to do. It usually takes only minutes or less with each individual (of average disposition), so don't get discouraged about the time it takes to train a lot of animals.

Slow down and stop

If you want to slow an animal that is walking because you're driving it, simply back off the pressure. Calm animals will slow down and should stop.

If you've been moving them for awhile, they may keep going even if you back off because they probably think this is what you want. So you have to do something more to slow and stop them.

Walk up the side of an animal in the direction it is going. She should slow as you get to her shoulder. She should stop if you get past the shoulder.

If some animals don't slow or stop, you have a few options. If the stock aren't stopping because of past experiences (they think they shouldn't), then I get ahead of them a ways and zigzag back and forth until they stop.

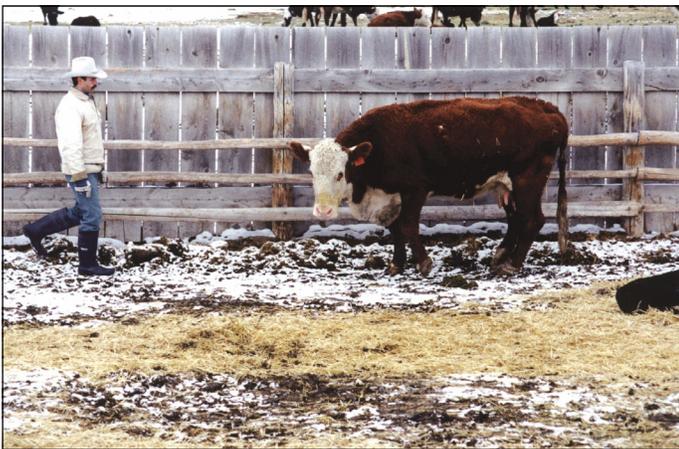
Before heading out on the range

You might also have to get ahead and cut in straight across, perpendicular to the direction they are going. Let them rest a minute as a reward when they slow or stop.

If they just aren't comfortable yet with you on the sides, they might speed up. In this case, I stop going up the sides and spend a little more time just pressuring them to go ahead, or turn them some more until they are calmer and will let me go up the sides without overreacting.

Turning left or right (see diagram on page 70)

Neck: You can turn an individual animal away from you by pressuring directly into its neck.



You can turn an animal across and out in front of you by pressuring its hip away from you.

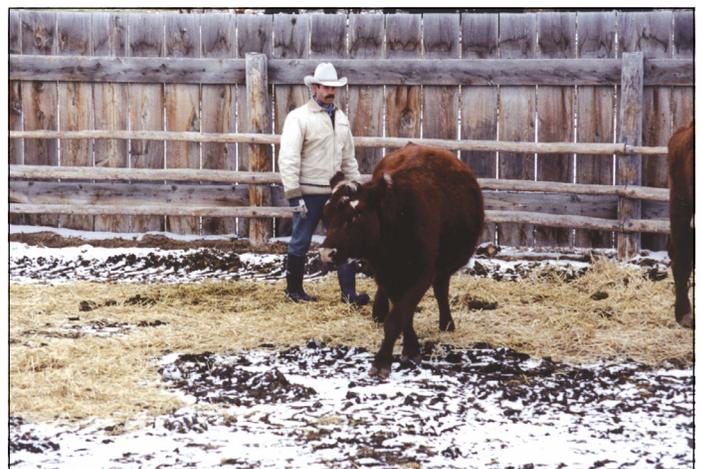
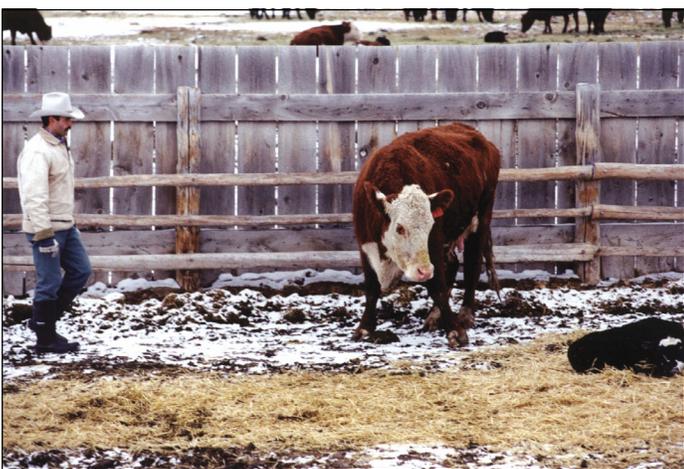
I like to check animals to see if they will turn calmly when I pressure their hips or neck. If you direct pressure the neck on the left side, the animal should turn its head and shoulders away to the right.

Pressure the neck on the right side and the head and shoulder will move to the left. This is similar to a turn on the haunches with a horse. They should turn whether walking or standing still.

If you want to get a real snappy turn to the left, pressure the left side of her neck exactly when her right front shoulder is just starting to come forward. You would do this on the range mostly if you just wanted to show off.

Hips: If you want the animal to turn to the left from a position on the left, then pressure the hip and the hip will move away from you. Pressure on the left hip will cause a standing cow to turn her haunches out and pivot more on her front legs. As a result, she turns to the left.

Pressure the hips from the right side and she will turn to the right (wrap around you if you keep at it.) (See diagram on page 69)



Before heading out on the range

Handling wilder stock

To get sensitive stock comfortable with you being around

You need to be able to get close enough to work sensitive cattle effectively and efficiently before you start applying direct pressure into their sides or go by them.

The easiest, least pressure way to get stock working is to just be around them without asking for anything. Stand quietly far enough away from the herd so there is little chance they will leave but close enough so they know you are there.

With sensitive stock you may have to do this for 10 to 15 minutes or more. Just watch them and let them get used to you being there. Wait for them to relax before progressing.

How to get closer to sensitive stock

When stock are comfortable with you around, approach them at a flat angle, never directly head on, by walking or riding straight lines back and forth. Then retreat just before they move off. The animals are okay with you around, but not perhaps with you asking them to move yet, and you still need to obtain a workable flight zone distance.

If the stock get nervous, back off and relax to let them know that pressure has a release and they don't have to bolt from you to get that release. You want them to see that they can control pressure and that you'll back off whenever they show signs of concern.

At the end of each pass, edge a little closer toward them and ride a straight line across again, edging closer each pass. Don't take your eyes off the stock. Approach only to where you feel the animal will move (like when a head goes up) and then back off (release pressure) before it does.

After you back off, stand still and wait to end the lesson. The edgier the stock, the longer you might need to wait. This lets them know you only wanted to get that close and won't keep coming if it bothers them. Watch for a relaxed look and posture before approaching closer each time.

If they aren't relaxed, back off and wait. Usually if they are grazing or have their heads lowered otherwise, they have relaxed enough to get closer.

Work a herd or an individual this way until you've attained the distance you want to work them from. From this point, you can start getting them to respond calmly to moving from straight lines back and forth, direct pressure into their sides, or whatever is appropriate for the animal or herd.

How to approach, bunch, and get pairs mothered up

Before working a herd to move together, walk around to let them know you're there so you don't jump any.

If you're working pairs, then disturb them just enough to so they get the idea they are going to move. They should get up, look for their calves or mothers, and get mothered up. Cows can go to the calves or calves to the cows. Either way is fine. Allow yourself the time it takes to get this accomplished. If animals are bedded, bump them just enough so they get up, stretch and dung or urinate.

Don't pressure unpaired animals to move on with good movement or they may forget about their calves (many first calf heifers will) and leave them. Cows and calves don't necessarily have to be side by side when moving, but they should know where each other are.

Moving a herd

Getting movement started

To start movement in a herd, use the good movement of the ones you start to attract others to go with them. Before starting a drive, bunch cattle up just enough so this can happen. Be prompt about pressuring a number of them in a short time so movement attracts movement. But be careful about getting too much movement.

Approach sensitive stock until just before you think they may move off. They will let the pressure build up as you approach. One way of encouraging them to move off without that first step getting too big is to stop, back up a step or two, and then move your horse's head or your shoulders (if on foot) slightly back and forth. This should help start movement and avoid an over-reaction. Let them go a ways off before you follow up the movement.

At this point, you probably don't need to focus on keeping the movement going. It's okay if they go off a ways and then stop if they are nervous. If they do stop, you should also stop and back off a step or two.

Work to develop a feel for approaching and judging when they will move. Then back off before it builds too much.

Once the stock don't feel they should take off whenever you show up, starting movement might require the following:

- Walk straight lines back and forth across the bunch within the flight zone. Let the stock move off and/or step back once they go.
- Walk a zigzag type pattern across the herd within the flight zone, angling closer with each line until they move.

- Walk directly into the sides of animals, one at a time, rapidly going from one to another.
- Walk right up and stand next to any animal that isn't moving until it moves. This might have to be done with real quiet stock that don't want to move or think they don't have to.

You can also lead a herd. One person leads the cows and using the above techniques, a dog or person drives from behind. The lead rider needs to be sure he or she isn't slowing or turning the stock and stays close enough to draw them with his or her movement.

Stock will need some practice at following a lead rider before they do this well. But it's a great way to move a herd and probably the lowest stress way I can think of. Cattle like to follow something.

When the stock are together, pressure them using any or combinations of the above techniques.

When moving a herd versus individuals, you'll be working it's collective flight zone. Finding it is usually easiest by going back and forth, edging closer in with each pass until the stock start to move. When they first go off, you may have to back off pressure as they do. Backing off helps control movement, because often a herd will allow you closer and the pressure to build while they are deciding which way to go. If you don't ease the pressure, they may go off too fast.

Let the herd decide which direction they go at first. Give them at least two ways to go so they won't feel trapped or get panicky.

Before heading out on the range

If you use direct pressure on individuals in front of others, back off a bit to allow them to follow the movement you started. Get out of the way so others can follow.

When some go, keep encouraging movement and all should go. You should only have to pressure a small percentage of the herd. The rest should join in. Get the leaders going and watch them. They have the longest flight zone, so you can effectively get them going without having to affect the others. Others will follow the leaders.

Once the herd has chosen a direction, go with it and keep the stock moving. If you have a group that is too spread out, you'll have difficulty keeping them all going.

If you have a herd that wants to split or individuals that stray off, you have the choice to keep working the ones in front of you or working those that split.

Remember, you can use any techniques you need to start the herd going—straight lines behind, zig-zag pattern, or direct pressure to the sides. Some may go if you just stand there or lean into them. You need to find out which is best.

The idea with starting an untrained herd out is to encourage them to move and allow them to come together. If you pressure them first to move **and** go the way you want, it will be a bit too much for some of them, and you'll have some stress.

But resist the urge to curve around and tuck in the corners. Just keep straight lines, back and forth. Persist. They will come together.

With an untrained herd on the range

A herd on the range is usually bunches scattered around the unit. Whether working small bunches or one big herd, the approach is similar in concept.

I usually work scattered bunches first. As they work better, I let them go to the main herd. I gather all the bunches until I have a herd, then work them so they can experience that driving with a herd is comfortable, which rekindles their herd instinct. Animals you find first in the main herd are usually calmer and not so likely to be an immediate problem, so I usually leave those for last.

I like to drift graze an unworked herd on the range, sometimes for quite some time, until they all get the idea that they can work for me. Approach, mother up and gather the herd as described in previous instructions and according to the sensitivity of the cattle. Many times you will want to just ride lines back and forth, shorter or longer as needed, until you see calmness about it.

When the herd has been drifted until calm, think about asking them to start driving well (come together better and walking with good movement).

Either way, the herd might split and go different ways after going a short distance, or the front might motor on away from the rest, usually picking the toughest, worst place they can find.

If this happens, pick a group to work, get them trained, and then incorporate them into another bunch or the herd. I usually pick the rowdiest bunch to work first, because they will take off the farthest and usually find a good place to hide out.

When driving pairs

You'll likely find that cows and calves will separate when first driving, but work to get and keep them mothered up as much as possible.

Cows without calves or vice-versa are usually too anxious to learn much from a handler. It may take some time for first-calf heifers, especially, to calm down and stay with the calves. During training, when the herd is responding better, you can bunch them together at some point and give them a chance to re-mother up if needed. Take the time you need to start them mothered. Stop as often as you need to get them re-mothered. Move them very slowly (drifting and grazing) if that is what it takes to keep them mothered up. This is an especially valuable technique if you have small calves.

Drift grazing stock is also a good way to train them to be comfortable with you and correct pressure.

Use the least amount of pressure you need to get them going and keep going. Don't worry too much about animals that are off to the side or lagging behind. Give them a chance and let them come. They usually will if the rest are moving well. If you worry too much about these and break off to get them, you can easily lose the movement of the main herd.

Once the herd is going, you'll see which animals are real sensitive to pressure. They will be at the front. You can now start to ascertain the herd's training needs. Some herds move off okay but don't want to stop. Some are so gentle (like some dairy herds), they are hard to move well. Some want to scatter off in different directions. Lucky riders may have all of these types.

After driving stock a bit, it's common to see some of the lead animals really move off. Cows may leave their calves. They're on the march and getting way ahead of the main herd. They are showing you they are uncom-

fortable with your pressure and don't look at the herd as the place to be.

Correct this by showing them they can respond to pressure without over-reacting to it. Leave the rest and take the time to work with these leaders. If you don't correct this, you won't get the herd to drive well, stay together, or stay placed.

Don't try to keep a herd grouped by shoving the back to keep up with the front. If stock in the lead are running off, leave the followers and go with the lead.

You want to get them to understand they don't have to avoid pressure by taking off and that they can't. Don't let the stock end the lesson on this note. Work them as a group of especially sensitive animals. When they are calmer, responding well to your cues and turning okay, drift them back into the main herd. When they are back in the main bunch, wait a few minutes to let them all settle. You want them to see that being with the bunch is okay—and you get to rest with them a minute.

Sometimes there are animals that seem to just "know" where we're going and get ahead too far. You want them to get the idea that staying close with the group is comfortable.

With ones like this, the idea is to get their attention on you. Go get them and work them until they take pressure calmly. When they do, turn them back into the main group.

Through all this initial training, don't be concerned about direction or where they are going. You want to get proper movement away from pressure into their sides down first. Practice getting them comfortable and responsive to moving off from pressure well and leaders not splitting off from the herd. You want to see that pairs are comfortable enough with handling to stay together better.

Before heading out on the range

You should expect to have a number of animals leave the bunch or get too far ahead in the beginning, but you want a semblance of a herd with animals starting to get the idea of staying and moving together. For the ones that leave, take extra time to work until they are calm.

Driving well

When stock are staying together fairly well, it's time to get them driving well. Herds need to be taught to do this.

Driving well means the stock stay together and move at a comfortable pace. Only slight pressure is needed to keep them going in the direction they are headed. There is no bumping, crowding or weaving. Pairs are mothered up. They aren't distracted by green grass, going by other stock, or variations in terrain. There's no fooling around. They are single minded on you. They follow the movement of others, and their movement attracts others to go with it.

They will come to experience only by driving this way that they will get some measure of release of pressure from you.

To encourage driving well and keep it

Get the herd together without crowding or jamming them. Use techniques that get good movement.

To teach a herd to drive well, work it to go with good movement, zigzagging and pressuring individuals from behind as needed.

Don't be afraid to really apply the pressure and persist as long as it takes to get what you want. Relax a bit when they do what you want, follow the movement, going back and forth when they are going well. Get back in to keep them going and to speed them up if they slow. Do this as many times as it takes to get them responsive to pressure. Whenever they reach the pace you want, release (relax) pressure a bit.

Don't be fooled—animals are very aware when you do this.

Concentrate on moving the leaders of the herd while the herd is moving. Watch the leaders and how they are going. They are the ones that are the most sensitive to pressure (bigger flight zone) and the ones that are drawing others to go with them.

Pressure or accommodate any that slow or veer away.

Create movement that attracts movement. Pressure if movement slows. Back off if it goes a bit too fast.

Pressure or follow any that take a side trail until they want to turn back in, then let them. Some of them will keep doing this until they get comfortable with what you want and with being in a moving herd. Go with any that want to race ahead and leave the bunch.

Avoid bulges or dips in the herd and try to keep a fairly close, even line across the back of the herd. Don't ride up the sides or curve around them. Drive them this way until you can back off some and they still stay together and move well. This shows they are getting the idea.

A herd that seems to be difficult to move will seemingly all of a sudden flow together and go if you quietly persist in asking for that. Now they are getting the idea to go straight with good movement and keep going as a herd. Make this real comfortable for them. Just go with them and follow the movement, pressuring as lightly or as much as needed to keep them going.

Move the herd as much as it takes for them to drive well, perhaps an hour or more, depending on the sensitivity of the animals and your skill level.

The method behind getting them to drive well is to practice lessons to move straight away, move out well (with good movement), slow down or speed up, stay with the herd, and keep going. All stock should be going straight. Most animals will relax and be comfortable with all this very soon.

If calves or cows are tired, give them a rest. Keep the pace a little slower for pairs with small calves and rest them as you need to, or you'll end up with a pile of little ones at the back end.

Three ideas for slowing or stopping a herd

One. Stop pressuring or prompting them to keep moving. Let them slow. With cattle that are quiet and responsive to the rider, especially when they are tired, all that's required to slow them is to change to a lower pressure technique like straight lines behind if you were formerly zigzagging and/or direct pressure. This will slow the lead, and the rest should slow.

If you want a stop, drift the herd a ways and back off all pressure, then get out of the pressure zone.

Two. Encourage them to slow. With stock that handle well but want to keep going, you'll need to use some additional techniques.



Walk up the side to slow the herd.

First, everyone should back off pressuring them to go and just follow from behind. Go up the sides with the flow or direction of movement within the flight zone. They should slow with a rider out to the side and perhaps even stop as you go past each one. You can adjust this to some degree by how far in the zone you are, how far you go up past them, and when you relax pressure. Move outwards if they turn away and in closer if there is too little effect.

Release pressure when you are at the sides by going out wider when they do slow and stop.

If they stay on the march and try to keep ahead, let them. Go back to practicing driving well or turning and going by you and then try slowing them again. This tests how well you are handling them and their understanding that they won't be forced or bothered.

Practice getting them comfortable with you going up the sides first before going to the front, because it's easier for some of them to take this than you being up front.

Three. Cause them to slow. Herds sometimes feel they should move fast and keep going. They are on the march, don't respond to easing of pressure, and don't slow when you go up the sides. You can slow some of these herds by persisting with staying out on the sides. Some you can't.

If you can't get them to slow or stop by being on the sides, go to the lead and zigzag in front until all have slowed. Then let them walk at a comfortable walk for a time. Don't crowd or stop them while they are walking nicely. They may have the idea they need to keep going at all costs, or perhaps they are single-minded on going where they think they should.

Before heading out on the range

If they don't respond well to slowing when you are up front and zigzagging, switch to riding ahead without trying to influence them much. Keep ahead and be patient. Soon they will get the idea it's okay to slow down. Be sure you're not pressuring them too much to slow—just let them slow. They will when they realize it's okay.

When placing stock, you'll want to slow them down and drift them to the spot you want them to stay in. This is partly why you will need to practice slowing them by reducing pressure and doing straight lines behind. You'll want to be able to get their minds off moving without forcing them to slow or stop.

If you force or put too much pressure on to slow, movement will take another direction. Switching to straight lines behind usually gets a calm herd to slow and drift.

If you are working wild cattle on the range and can't get ahead of them, follow behind. Go slower than they are and stop when they stop. This is the same instruction as described in working sensitive animals.

Speed up a herd

- Bunch the herd up more so they are closer together. If they are too spread out, movement of some won't attract movement from the others enough.
- Change from straight lines behind to zigzagging.
- Change from zigzagging to direct pressuring. Pressure directly into the sides of animals at the back of the herd. Take a very deliberate faster walk at them when you pressure.

- Concentrate on speeding up the leaders. Work the middle of the back more so you get closer to the leaders, then direct pressure into the sides of animals that are off to your sides to encourage the back to get going.
- Go up to the front of the herd or animal and then straight back against the direction of movement (or opposite the way its facing) past the herd or animal.
- Get off the horse and work on foot, if necessary.
- Real calm animals may require you to try all of the above. With individuals that won't move at all, just stand real close off the side toward the back until they move. Don't get kicked!

Solving movement problems

Stock that lag behind the herd

Stock commonly hang back from the herd for a couple of different reasons. Decide what to do about it based on the cause.

First reason: Some animals are just slow to come with the herd. It takes them time to decide what to do. They may just not feel like leaving. They are usually looking intently at the herd or looking around to find a calf. Leave them alone. They'll probably come. If you have plenty of help, it won't hurt to send somebody to go get it while other riders keep the main group going. Doing this helps teach it to be timely about coming along, but you don't need to if you are busy and short of extra help. They invariably come along anyway. Don't force the animal back, though. If she takes a lot of encouragement to follow then you have other problems to fix.

Second reason: Some animals don't really want to be with the herd. They will often just turn and go another way or veer off to hide somewhere. They will often have little interest in what the rest of the herd is doing. They are sometimes bug-eyed, sensitive to pressure and watching you more than the herd.

Animals like this need good handling to overcome their concerns about you and being in the herd. Leave the herd to go work them. Stock that just up and leave the herd can be quitting the bunch, and you need to go with them. There are times when you may have caused them to leave by applying too much pressure. Be careful to distinguish whether you caused it or if the animal needs more work.

When you find you have to go back for an animal that is facing towards the herd, walk a bit off to its side and go straight by it, against the direction it is facing.

Bulls blocking traffic

When driving a herd of cows with bulls during breeding season, it's common to have bulls messing up movement by slowing or stopping some of the cows, blocking the gate, fighting with other bulls, etc. Moving a herd can get the bulls chasing cows and butting heads. This behavior can make it difficult to keep a herd going, so you'll want to address the problem if you have it.

The problem is caused because their attention has been diverted. Maybe you never really had their attention in the first place. Regain their attention by asking them to do something that you want. This can be going back to getting them good at pressure into their sides or driving well with the herd. Either way, ask them to do something else.

Every time a bull is fooling around or even thinking about it, I immediately pressure it to move ahead, speed up, turn, or whatever is appropriate. Go directly to the bull and direct him to move. Follow up with him to make sure he keeps going. The bull will soon learn that doing anything other than what you are asking produces firm pressure.

What you are trying to do is take that animal's single-mindedness on fooling around on to being single-minded about responding to your signals. Sometimes this takes only three or four times of pressuring and getting a positive response to get the bull to quit fooling around for good.

Difficulty keeping good movement

Difficulty getting and keeping good movement in a herd needs to be corrected.

Good movement means all pairs are mothered (or comfortable with where their calves are). All animals follow others that are going well. There isn't any crowding or weaving, and they move at a good walk when you pressure.

A good walk is one that attracts others to follow but is still a comfortable pace for the animal. If animals just plod along, they aren't attracting others to go, and you'll have to work real hard to keep a drive going.

The ideal situation is to get the leaders moving at a good walk and to let the rest flow in and follow. This creates the best type of movement and is easy to keep going. Always concentrate and focus on the lead animals. Get and keep them going at the pace you want.

All you have to do to keep good movement is follow and encourage them to keep going by watching and increasing the pressure a bit as you see signs of wanting to slow.

Before heading out on the range

Stock not comfortable with handling while in the herd

One reason for stock not moving well is because they aren't comfortable enough with your handling. This can cause them to weave, curve, split, slow up, or create some unmothered pairs.

To solve this problem, go back to drift grazing the herd until they get some calmness about that. Work up to driving when they are ready.

Build up to gathering them into a cohesive bunch and driving them with good movement. Take them back into a smaller area or corral if you need to and practice. Make sure they all understand to move away from pressure into their sides from nearer the back and to go by you.

Practice turning, slowing down, and speeding up using various techniques in a larger setting once they are good with the basics. Make sure the herd drives well on flat ground before expecting good drives on steep rangelands.

Always reward stock for each step they do right. And always end the lesson when teaching them anything.

Handler errors—going up the sides within the flight zone

The second—and perhaps more common—cause of poor movement is when handlers go up the sides of the herd and within the flight zone. This can cause the back ones to turn at the corners or at the sides crossways into the bunch, creating bumping, crowding, and slowing of some of the stock. Stock really hate being pushed from behind and slowed from the sides at the same time.

A common mistake is curving in on the sides of stock when riding straight lines behind them.

Correct this by walking straight lines behind and making sure you are out of the flight zone if you go up the sides.

There is nothing wrong with going up the sides to the front. Working the front can be an excellent way to get the stock across tough places or up steep hills. But be sure to go way out of the flight zone or you will slow the herd or cause bad movement of some sort that you don't want.

On more traditional cattle drives, it's a common practice to drive a herd by getting behind them and waving arms. Usually the stock go away from you and the noise, but you get all kinds of bad movement—bumping, crowding, walking too fast or too slow, not going straight, all at once.

Riders create this by going up the sides either to turn some in or bunch some up. Sometimes I have no idea why they are there, and neither do the stock. Doing this slows the herd behind the rider or turns animals in or across the direction of movement. Riders in the back compensate by shoving harder to keep them going, which can cause animals to start crowding and bumping and leaving calves. This is very stressful to the animals, and many get real uncomfortable being with the herd.

Think about your techniques and make sure the problem hasn't been caused by something you're doing wrong.

Here's some ways to correct problems if you think the handlers' position or actions are the problem (not that the stock just need more time to handle better for you):

- Make sure everyone stops doing things that stress the stock like making loud noise and shoving.
- Make sure you aren't using pressure to force them. Relax pressure when they reach the right pace and move together.

- If you must go up the sides to turn stock (at the head of the herd), go wide and outside of the flight zone so you don't affect them.
- Make sure all riders stay in a straight line, perpendicular to the direction you want them to go (see diagram on page 79 and photo on page 103).
- Remember that the main job of riders on the ends of the line is to guide herd direction. Riders in the middle part should generally be the ones keeping movement going. If you have three riders, the rider on the left is responsible for pressuring the left side harder (to speed them up) so the herd will turn to the right. For a turn to the left, this rider would be careful to back off the pressure on the left, allowing the left side to slow. Thus you can see that unless you are all working together correctly, you can give stock mixed signals and create stress in the entire herd rather quickly.
- Remember to go back and forth behind the herd. Watch to see that when you are going to one side or the other that you don't turn the lead animals too much left or right as you go wider to the side. Going back and forth too far or staying out too long will cause too much weaving in the lead animals, creating poor movement and bothering the animals. Watch for just a slight turn from the lead and then turn back the other way. Use your judgment and timing to go back and forth to keep the lead straight from then on.

Stock too calm

A third cause of hard to move stock is when the herd becomes really calm around the handlers and don't move out of fear. Having calm stock is great, but being hard to drive isn't. Some herds seem to think, "Hey, I don't think I have to move ahead except a few feet."

Livestock need to experience that they should keep going unless you ask them to slow or stop. Correct this by taking time with individual animals.

With a herd that is hard to keep going, keep pressuring quietly but persistently. They will soon understand that plodding along produces consistent pressure. As soon as they pick up the pace, relax the pressure a bit but don't throw the reins away. This may take 30 minutes or more of continued asking, especially with a herd that doesn't think they have to.

With a herd that slows and is getting hard to drive but is comfortable with your pressure, concentrate on asking them to slow or speed up before it's their idea to do it. Speed them up, then ask them to slow before they do it on their own. With practice, they will wait longer and longer to slow and will get to waiting for you.

With animals that stop and look or go to grazing, pressure them into their sides to go off with good movement. Watch what they do. If they even think about slowing, quickly go back and pressure again. Do this a few times, and they will learn to move and keep moving. Be patient. They will go soon and understand they need to go or you will keep the pressure on.

Make sure you're not shoving stock. Some people pressure animals real hard to go and when they do go, shove them for good measure.

Before heading out on the range

Stock shoved a lot like this will think moving isn't profitable, something like "Hey! If I go I get pressure. If I stop I get pressure. So I'll stay put because it's easier." I've seen this happen on the range where some cows refused to move at all for anything. This is abuse of the animal caused by a lack of knowledge.

Stalled out herd

Sometimes a herd will slow during a drive in spite of continued pressure by the riders. It might be going uphill, downhill, through a gate, or when the herd is getting tired.

When a herd is stalling out, the idea is to get the lead animals going with good movement again so the rest of the herd will be attracted to go with them.

With a stalled or stalling herd, you need to get closer to the ones in the lead, because the pressure zone has shrunk due to circumstances. You must get closer to the leaders so you can put enough pressure on them to go with good movement. To do this, work the herd from the middle section of the back more. Don't worry about covering ground across the back of the whole bunch in this case. Work the middle where you can best influence the lead animals.

As the middle portion moves up (away from you), this creates a pocket around you, with animals ahead and to your sides. Encourage the ones to your sides to really move out by applying direct pressure to their sides. Pressure, then step back, to let those behind follow it.

If cattle completely stop, such as they might when on a narrow trail going up or down a steep hill, working the middle might not produce what you want because the pressure zone of the lead has shortened so much.

In these cases I think the stock view the way as closed. Think about going up to the front and pressuring the lead animal into her side directly. Pressure firmly and step back to let others come, direct pressuring into the sides of the oncoming animals as needed to keep good movement.

Summary for getting and keeping good movement

The end goal of getting a herd to drive well is reached when the animals are all single-minded on doing what you ask, they follow the lead animals, and movement attracts movement.

The herd should move at a nice comfortable walk for whatever class of animal they are. They go straight and stay together (but not crowded) while moving. Pairs stay mothered up. They speed up when you increase pressure, slow down when it's reduced, and turn easily when you go out wide to the sides or pressure one side harder than the other. They do none of these things on their own accord. There isn't any leaving on side trails, cows head butting each other, bulls fighting, mounting etc.

All this doesn't just happen on your first attempts to drive them. They have to experience that it's profitable for them to do it as a herd. Once they do and you continue to handle them properly, they will drive well from then on.

You must build a foundation for a herd to drive well before asking for a good drive.

Start where the herd shows you they need to be started. Don't force the herd to come together. It might be that you have to start and keep the herd only loosely bunched together and just drift graze along when first teaching them to be a herd and to drive. I don't like stock thinking that drifting is all they ever have to do, so do this only until they are comfortable with moving this way. Then start asking them to come together more and move along.



Excellent example of starting a drive with all riders in line perpendicular to the direction they want to go.

It is harder to get and keep good movement in a loosely spaced herd because you have to pressure too far along behind due to the width of the back of any decent sized herd. Also, the animals aren't close enough to attract the movement of others. Once they come together better, ask for more pace, then less pace, then for a turn, a stop, and then eventually to stay. Build up to these things so you have a herd that is highly controllable when driven.

Persistence is the key to staying together and getting animals to experience that leaving the herd, bulling, stopping, etc., isn't profitable. Forcing, scaring, or rushing them back in to the herd doesn't solve the cause of these problems. Quietly persist with working animals that are moving too slow, going too fast, or otherwise not single-minded on what you're asking.

- You must have good movement to keep a herd going so have the lead cattle moving well. Keep in mind that with some herds, like those with lots of first calf heifers or cows with small calves, may need to be moved more slowly. You may have to deal with a loosely spaced herd at first and just drift them along until they get calm enough to stay together.
- Use the movement of the ones going well to attract others to follow. Concentrate on getting some of them moving with good movement but at a comfortable pace for them. Then just encourage others to go.
- When animals slow, switch to techniques that encourage a better walk like applying direct pressure to the sides of individual animals from a position at the rear or side of the herd. Make sure your angle of approach leads the animal correctly so it looks like you will run into it if you keep going.
- When you direct pressure animals that are going too slow, take a fairly quick pace and pressure like you mean it.
- A herd goes best when they are lined out following the leaders. These are the key animals to start and turn. Pressure so the lead animals will be drawing others.

Before heading out on the range

- Keep pressuring individuals just before they slow or stop when you want them to go at a good walk. Catch them as the idea forms.
- Pay attention to herd speed. Don't snooze and let them slow before you want them to.
- Work as close to the stock as you can.
- Make sure stock are mothered-up. If they aren't, give them a chance to re-mother up and start the drive again when they are. Correct what is causing them to become unpaired.
- Get off the horse and pressure them on foot if you need more control.
- If you're working on foot, sometimes getting on a horse will help speed up learning.
- If your stock are tired or unmothered, let them stop to rest and remother. Well-handled stock will stick around until you're ready to move on.
- Don't train your herd to drive if they are hungry or thirsty or during real hot or nasty weather. These distractions make it harder to do and will take longer.

If you continue working a herd well, they will get comfortable with your requests to move, keep moving, and stay together while moving. Sometimes it may seem like it isn't working, but all of a sudden the entire herd will get the idea and move out really well.

If the herd is slow in going and you think your technique is right, keep pressuring this way until they get the idea that plodding along will produce continued (quiet and persistent) pressure. Once they go, reward them by relaxing yourself.

Turning

The idea of getting good turns is to get smooth turns, with no bumping or crowding and without losing the momentum of the drive. Like with horses or driving a truck, anytime you ask animals to turn you have to give them more gas to keep going the same speed.

- When the herd is driving well, you have the movement you need to start getting good directional control.
- Make sure the herd is moving well together. If not, it will be hard to get good control over direction because you'll be fighting the ones that stall out or take off.

Turning a herd

You have roughly three choices in how to turn a herd. Sometimes the terrain or the herd size or shape limits your choices.

The first way is go up to the front of the herd and turn the lead cow either by pressuring her neck or hip.

This can be a very accurate way of turning lead stock precisely where you want to turn such as at road or trail crossings or through a gate opening into a new paddock.

The second way is to turn the lead cow by moving straight out wide to the right or left. The lead will turn, and the rest will follow. The rider does this from behind the herd.

The third way is to turn the whole herd from the back by working one side more. Do this by shifting over to the side you want to turn and speeding it up. This is the general way I turn herds on the range, but it is a little less accurate way with a big herd when the lead cows may be quite far ahead. This can make it difficult to get the lead cow to turn at precisely the right spot.

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Riders starting to shift positions.



Letting the herd decide to turn.



Turn completed, riders oriented properly.

Turning techniques for a herd

Go to the front of the herd and pressure the neck or hips to turn lead animals. Go up the side of the herd (outside the flight zone, of course) and get ahead of the lead cows or along with them. Then turn and pressure their necks.

If you are on the right side and want them to turn to the left, pressure the neck of the lead animal until she turns left. Animals coming up behind will have a desire to follow her and also to stop and look at you. This will clog things up if you don't go back and forth in short straight lines at an angle. You may have to keep pretty busy doing it this way, but sometimes terrain limits you getting to the inside of the turn.

I prefer to turn animals to the left by being on the left. From this position I can thread a herd precisely up a trail or across a narrow bridge, because I can control both speed and direction the best.

For a left turn, this means I will pressure the left hip of the lead cow until she turns her head left and just the amount I want. I get the turn first and then speed it up. I can step back after she turns and speeds up and pressure the one behind to do the same. I can do this to all the animals coming up behind her from essentially one spot. They should follow her direction and I can speed them up as needed to keep up the movement I need to keep the others coming.

Before heading up to the lead to turn a herd, make sure you have them walking at a good pace first. All the movement could die out if the herd is plodding along.

Before heading out on the range

Stay near the back of the herd but go out wider to the side. If you are driving stock and want a herd to turn to the left, you can move straight out to the right—as far out as needed—until the lead cows turn to the left. When they turn the right amount, go back to your left and drive them through the turn, usually pressuring the right side more than the left. Go back out wide as you need more turn and come back in across as you need more movement.

I use this technique a lot when working smaller herds alone, because I can get back quick enough to keep the movement going. The lead cows have to be able to see me for this to work.

If one or two animals on the drive start wandering away a bit on another path, you can go out straight and wide to the side and they should go back in readily.

If the cattle have turned in the direction you want, quit asking and get out of the flight zone, which is their reward for turning.

Turning requires you to constantly watch the lead animals and adjust to get the right turn and keep them from overturning. You also have to watch the main herd to see that movement doesn't die out and that you aren't crowding or jamming them.

Speed up one side more than the other from a position behind the herd to make smooth turns. A great way to get real smooth turns is to drive one side of the herd faster than the other.

Like the wheels of a car when turning, one side must move faster than the other, because it has to move farther.

To start a turn to the left, shift from going back and forth across the bulk of the back end to working the right side more. Done properly and with good timing, the left side will slow, the middle will keep going, and the right side will speed up, creating a nice smooth turn.

Remember that when turning a herd, it takes more “go forward” pressure to keep a herd moving and turn than to just keep it moving. Keep busy watching and adjust. Firm up if you need to.

This technique isn't a whole lot different from the previous one. Sometimes it requires you to use various combinations of techniques. Go out far to the right or stay in closer, move that side faster and vary your position and movements as you see the effects on the cattle.

Working a herd with more than one handler
When driving a herd from the back with more than one rider, make sure that all riders are **in a straight line** and oriented **perpendicular** to the direction you want the stock to go or keep going.

When turning a herd to the right, slow the animals on the right or inside and speed up the outside animals. To do this requires changing the orientation of the line to become perpendicular to the direction you want the herd to go. This means handlers on one side will slow up or drop back, if needed, for a sharper turn to encourage one side of the herd to slow, while handlers on the other side pressure more to get that side to speed up or keep going. Only the people closest to the stock should be the ones applying pressure.

Here's an example. If you want to turn a herd to the right and you have three riders:

- The rider on the right slows or stops pressuring that side or backs off altogether, depending on the speed and the sharpness of the turn you want.
- The rider on the left pressures more and moves himself up and the stock moves ahead faster.
- The rider in the middle keeps himself in line between the other two and pressures only as needed to keep some movement in the middle section of the herd.

When you practice this a few times, you can create a nice smooth turn without crowding, bumping, or losing movement with the herd.

Any rider out of line, especially on either of the ends, could cause a herd to veer or skip off and bulges to occur. Livestock, being single minded, can key in on one person out of line and go away from him. You could find this very difficult to correct unless that person gets back in line. Keep all riders working together this way, or you could have no end of problems.

Stopping for placing the herd

Drifting stock in

Drive stock to the nearest water and let them drink before placing them in the grazing area.

Let your stock drift graze into the grazing area and space themselves out a little so they will have plenty of feed where they will be staying.

When they are nearing where you want them, encourage movement to die within the herd. Back off pressure and stay behind the herd and watch for them to slow. Before they stop, go to straight lines back and forth behind to keep them drifting in to where you want them. When they get there, back off all pressure and let them stop.

Some cows might keep moving so pressure any that are still drifting by going up their sides or getting ahead of them. When they stop drifting or walking, relieve all pressure.

Get back away from them and take a look to see if you have all the movement out of them. If you don't, tend to it right away. Sometimes this means packing up and going for a drive until they stop thinking that moving is what they should do.

Spreading them out

A herd needs to be spread out so it has enough feed for the time you want them there. Usually I go up the sides to stop the lead animals. With a smaller herd, they are lined out and spread out a ways like soldiers for an inspection.

So after I stop them, I go back towards the middle of the string and ask them to go perpendicular to the way they are facing. This means drifting animals to the right or left (or both) to get them spaced. Ride straight lines, back and forth, perpendicular to the direction you want them to turn. Just encourage a drift straight out, not good movement, or you will get a drive started again. Sometimes you'll need to wade into the herd and move individuals and bunches farther out after doing this.

Sometimes the herd will drift in just about right, and all you have to do take the last bit of movement out of a few at the lead.

Before heading out on the range

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Andrew Doust — Australia, slowing a herd for placing.

Placing and settling the herd

As the last step, get a good number of animals to face different directions. This helps get their minds off moving and also helps prevent movement from some that are grazing into attracting others to follow.

If a herd drifted in and stopped well spaced out, gently turn a number of animals in the front toward the back. Cattle like to graze roughly in the direction they are facing if they are calm. Turn them by going back and forth in front of them or by pressuring at the head or hip to turn them into different directions. Animals facing different directions are less likely to get significant movement started.

Relieve all pressure when cattle are calm and facing different directions. Stand back and observe the herd carefully at this point to see if you missed any animals that are still uncomfortable with you around or are still stressed about being in a herd. Stand well back from the herd. You can move cattle by just standing still long enough, even from much farther away than you think.

Let them settle a bit. Many may go ahead and bed down; some will go to grazing. If you see any that get high-headed and bug-eyed as you walk around the herd, work them until they get comfortable enough to stay.

Sometimes shortly after letting them stop, a few may just pack up and leave and not look back. If any do this, go with them and work them until they get comfortable with your pressure and you.

It's okay to take a few others along with an animal that is quitting the bunch (usually some others will follow when it goes). Working these stock could mean letting them go ahead, whatever direction they want to go. Just follow behind and at a pace slower than they are going.

When they slow down and start to relax, pressure them from the side. They should go straight ahead. If not, practice until they do or go back to straight lines behind them or zigzagging until they are comfortable, and then direct pressure into their sides. When you get a straight-ahead response, ask for straight-ahead and good movement.

Walk up their sides in the direction they are going and see if they will slow or stop. When they do this well, check to see if they will turn by going out wider to the side. They should turn calmly and away from your pressure. Watch for a calm, relaxed, and responsive attitude. If you don't see this, keep working them until you do.

When they do all these things well, drift or drive them back into the herd. Drift them only when bringing them into the herd. This should put an end to them wanting to leave the group.

When animals have been through these lessons, they will usually head back to the herd on their own. If they don't, drift them all the way back in

when they are ready. When they get back to the herd, they should relax and perhaps bed down or graze. Get back away from the herd to facilitate this.

Cattle have a very strong association with the place they experience comfortable results. The last request you gave them, which was stop and relax, comes with the big reward of relief from all pressure.

I'm confident that a herd is ready to stay together and where I put them when I see a calm attitude appear in all the animals. They respond consistently well to all the things that I ask them to do and show they are quite content with where they are.

So with good handling, cattle will stay in the place you leave them. Cattle have learned its profitable to move straight away, move out well, move and stay with the herd, keep moving, speed up, slow down, change direction, stop, relax and stay. All of this was accomplished with proper pressure, consistent releases, complete attention on proper handling, and taking the desire to move out of them.

Well-handled stock will stay for a day or two when all movement is gone from the herd.

Points for review

Don't revert to force when you get in a tight spot, such as when cattle take off or won't go up a hill. Think a second about what caused it (you, for example) and how you can help them do it. Then set it up right so you can let it happen.

And relax. Any stock you work in the United States are surrounded on three sides by water. Customs will let you know if they get too far north.

It is critical that you approach training your stock with confidence, patience, and some knowledge of these principles and techniques. Stock will allow you exceptional control in an amazingly short amount of time if you will learn and apply these things. Believe this before you start.

Some animals may be very sensitive to pressure and require more time. Handling these animals will be no different in principle than the calmer ones. Your approach will require more sensitivity and may take a little more time. You may also have to take things back to a more basic level. If you have some real wild ones and don't currently have the expertise to get them better, you may want to keep them out of the main herd if it's scheduled for turnout on the range.

To do this well isn't easy—but it isn't hard either. It takes some time to get the feel of this and allow the stock to respond, but you are training them for a lifetime. They don't forget good handling or positive results they gain for themselves.

It can take more time to correct a specific problem with good stockmanship, because it requires addressing the root cause. But once it's corrected, you won't have to deal with the same problem again tomorrow.

If you're handling stock to go through a gate, for instance, it may take longer to get them through the first time with good techniques. But once they go through well, you won't have trouble at the gate again. With conventional handling, there is no certainty they will always go through.

Abandon the idea of scaring stock to go where you want them. If stock see you as a predator or aggressive (and they will if you **think** that way), you lose control.

Before heading out on the range

Believe there is a calm, responsive animal inside of every one you own, no matter what happens at first. Know they will do all the things I have said and even more.

First set a goal for the way you want your stock to handle for you—otherwise any road will get you there. That goal should include becoming a good boss for the herd and developing animals that are comfortable and responsive to everything you ask them to do, wherever you ask them to do it.

Approach your animals carefully by edging closer and closer and watching to see where they are mentally and emotionally. Think about walking straight lines, flat back and forth. If they seem quiet, maybe a zigzag type approach is appropriate.

Watch them. If a head goes up, that shows apprehension that shouldn't be ignored. Do they just take off and run when you get near? If so, then they likely believe you are aggressive.

Can you get close enough to be able to pressure them effectively? Are they so calm that they won't move away from correct pressure? Will they move off well from basic pressure but split up when you go wider out to the side or perhaps keep going too much?

Do some want to leave the bunch and hide?

Use your initial assessment of how cattle perceive you to determine where to start training.

Start training where the stock have told you that you need to. Remember the most basic starting place is to let the animals find that it's okay for you to be around. Just be around the stock without asking for anything. The next steps might include letting them find out that you aren't going to force them, that pressure has a release, and that you won't do things that bother them.

If they have already taken off, go slower than they are and follow directly behind. This will help them want to see you so they are likely to slow and stop, giving you a chance to reward that step in the right direction. Stop when they stop and let them relax. After they relax a bit, approach and then retreat until you can get as close as you feel is workable.

When they are better about not taking off and more comfortable with you around, move back and forth a little or move your horse's head a bit to get them to go.

If the stock are comfortable with pressure and move off straight ahead with good movement, then see how they are with turning, how they speed up, slow, stop, and go through gates. Practice doing these things so you can be assured they trust your handling enough to do anything you need.

You will likely have some stock that are really concerned about you, and some that aren't. Handle the sensitive ones first so they are calmer before taking the herd out together. This avoids problems with working a whole herd.

If stock don't do something well like go through a gate or turn, the problem usually lies within one of two things. Either you are in the wrong position, or they still don't take pressure well enough. They are likely unsure about your handling and what they can do to relieve pressure, or they still see you as aggressive.

The answer here is to go back to practicing basic pressure and release, using good techniques with things you know they already do okay. Then build from there and practice more difficult moves.

If you think your technique is causing problems, correct it. Get some help if you need to. Have someone videotape your handling and watch it carefully. It's a great way to see what you did and how it affected things.

Assuming your technique is right, any problem in handling has either an emotional, mental or physical basis. When you have problems, determine which it is.

Emotional problems can only be corrected by addressing the performance of the animal. Go back to working the stock to do things they can do, and these problems will go away.

If stock don't do what you are asking but are comfortable with your handling, you are asking wrong.

Start any lesson at the level they are at. The stock will tell you where to start, how fast to progress, and how it's working.

Different techniques are more effective in different situations. If what you're doing isn't working, change your techniques or even components of techniques.

Check your attitude (perhaps you need a bit more patience or should quit for the day) or go back to a place where you can get control and build from there.

Moving stock into a corral or pasture

Stock entering a corral or gate are usually being driven from behind. This is fine, but you need to focus on keeping good movement and pay attention to good directional control.

Make sure to watch how much pressure is applied as the stock start through. Stock feel more pressure when confined by a gate or bridge than by just being driven, so watch carefully and back off or add pressure as needed.

Follow the movement through the gate by going back and forth (on the same path) as you need to.

Don't chase or force the movement, or stock will get stressed and break back. Well-handled stock will follow movement into a corral if you don't pressure them too much to rush through.

Summary hints

Calves breaking back

Young calves can get disoriented to the herd rather easily if they are spun around by a handler mistake, especially if they are being moved unmothered to the cow.

If a calf breaks back on a drive and runs for the last place it thinks it was with mama, you may have to run and get ahead of it. But cross directly in front of it to stop it when you get a ways ahead without forcing it too much to stop. Work back and forth when it stops and relaxes a bit to get it to go back to the herd.

If one just hops back away, it is often best not to chase it immediately. Stop applying any pressure and give it room to come back by getting away. Often it will come right back in when it hears the herd. Correct what you did to cause this to happen.

Always watch the stock and let them tell you where you need to be.

Always walk in straight lines when near the stock. Don't curve around them, especially up the sides of a herd. You can change direction but proceed in as straight a line as possible. This helps stock know where you are going.

When you approach a herd with an unknown flight zone, approach them at an angle, never head on.

Before heading out on the range

Don't be afraid to make mistakes, but correct them quickly and learn from them. You're doing better if the stock are calmer and easier to handle after the session than before. Practicing with the stock improves your handling.

Vary your techniques to fit the situation.

You'll find that some of these techniques provoke a more or less dramatic response with animals of average disposition:

- Straight lines behind are generally less likely to really get them to move out and more likely to encourage a drift.
- Direct pressure into their sides will generally get them to move right out, especially if you look straight at them and march right in.
- Going against the direction of movement along the sides really speeds them up.
- Going with the direction of movement slows them down or can even stop them if you keep going past them.

With most of these techniques, the degree of training, mood of the herd, time of day, timing and speed of your movements, posture and attitude also control the degree of reaction from the stock.

Make adjustments in the techniques you use and how you use them all the time as you discover you need to. Make everything fit the animals and the response you want. Change the response you want if the stock show you they aren't ready to do what you intended.

Always use a position that places you closest to the spot where you can control speed and direction. In some cases you want to be up at the front of a herd when crossing a bridge, river, a tough gate or going up or down a steep hill. There, you can direct speed by going with them to slow the lead, speed them up by going down the sides, direct pressure to get them going or to speed up.

You control direction by being able to pressure them in the place where they can see you and where you want them to go. You can also pressure a hip or a head to turn them without moving yourself out of position much. You can guide a whole herd from one spot this way.

Above all, watch the animals. No one can predict ahead of time what is just right for every situation as you go into it. Develop a feel for what fits. This requires constant watching, thinking, and sensitivity to all the animals. This isn't an easy task with a large herd, especially when this is all new to you. Practice, watch, and adapt and the herd will get better and better.

Remember to work close to your animals when pressuring them. Being too much directly behind them or too far away behind them really bugs stock, because they wonder what you're confused about and what you're signaling them to do. If you are too far back and directly behind or too far away, they will often turn and slow or stop to look at you. Make it easy for them to see you, and let them know exactly what you want them to do.

Be specific in your requests. If you want them to turn 20 degrees right, for instance, don't settle for 10 or cause them to overturn. If you want them to move out at a good walk, don't settle for them plodding along. Focus all your attention on getting exactly what you want and be consistent and correct in how you ask and when you release.

Release them when they get it just right. Persist quietly in asking until they sense you won't quit until they give you a response. They are sensitive enough to respond to even subtle cues. It's much easier on animals—horse, cow, or dog—to know exactly what you want than for them to get it almost right and have you keep correcting them.

If you really don't want anything, get out of the flight zone so they know that.

Get good movement when driving them somewhere distant or going through a tough place such as up a steep grade or across a river. Get good movement from them and keep it going. Well-handled cattle can take a great deal of pressure when it is applied correctly, so don't be too timid.

Concentrate on anticipating livestock moves and try to get ahead of the situation instead of rushing to catch up and correct your position. Watch them closely. Think a step ahead and react quickly.

Don't allow stock to relieve pressure by escaping or running away, or they might get the idea that this is the thing to do. Help them understand that running off isn't the way to get relief from pressure by going with them if they do this. Prevent it in the first place, if possible, by not pressuring too much.

If you make a mistake sorting through a gate or emptying a corral, it's usually better to let one get away than to stress it by forcing a turn or stop.

Some situations such as branding or dehorning will stress stock, but proper handling makes these situations much less traumatic.

Stock will learn that pressure has a release and it only comes in so close to them. It doesn't keep coming no matter what they do. They learn to

“take pressure.” This is another reason pressure/release handling and good timing are so important.

When stock get comfortable with pressure and understand it, they learn confinement from corral fences, chutes, headgates, trailers, and other cattle close to them is nothing to panic about. They can take this kind of pressure.

Practice in difficult places

There are many situations where you will have to adapt techniques to tough terrain or constraints. For instance, where you can't run straight lines behind and have to work from the sides. There may be some places where you can't do either.

By remembering the principles and various tools of handling, you can almost always adapt and apply various techniques to many different situations. Learn and practice these techniques so you can make them work well for you in any setting.

If you “backslide” and stress stock by forcing something, they will get harder to control. Stress them repeatedly and seriously enough, and it will take longer to get them calm and responsive again than it did in the first place.

Always position yourself so the livestock can see you when you move them. When moving either an individual animal or a herd, there is a spot where you can get movement and direction and stay within sight of the animal or the whole herd when pressuring them. They need to know where you are, and you need to be where they can see you and the direction you want them to go.

Handling stock well requires constant monitoring of stock movements and responses, adoption of varying handler positions, timing your movements and using different techniques.

Before heading out on the range

Training stock to follow a lead handler

One of the most effective techniques for keeping a herd going in the right direction calmly is having a rider lead them. This might require a little training before they will do it, but is well worth it, especially on some of the tougher range or big pasture moves and gathers.

Cattle really like to follow something. Notice the lead cows on a move in a new area and you'll see them working to figure which way to go. Leading them relieves them of this. All they have to do is keep up the pace.

I use dogs or other riders bringing up the rear with myself at the front. If the stock are headed out on the march in the right direction, then you only need someone to lead. If you're leading, make sure you aren't slowing or splitting some off to either side of you. Keep the right distance ahead.

Leading can provide an excellent way of controlling direction, especially with big herds. It's a handy technique in steep terrain where you might have a tough time getting out wider to the sides or up to the front without messing up movement of the herd to make a turn. Mountain terrain and well-handled stock will tend to line out a herd so only a lead rider can make this work. Stock must be comfortable with you leading.

Training stock so they will follow well is fairly simple to do. Before working them to follow a lead, it's assumed you will have handled them so they respond well to basic pressure and handling. They should drive and turn well. Make sure you can work the herd from the sides also.

To begin working them to lead, have another person or a good dog drive the stock toward a lead handler. Doing this someplace they know the route to helps but isn't essential. Just have a person out in front and another drive the stock to them.

It's important for the lead handler to stay well enough out in front to avoid slowing, turning or splitting the herd, but not so far ahead that you aren't drawing them, so the lead person has to watch the stock all the time.

At first, most stock won't be comfortable with a lead handler but they will get comfortable within an hour or two. Some herds will take longer depending on how they are used to being handled.

Cattle that have been called are usually more comfortable following a person. Remember that a handler leading them can slow stock, so be careful not to do that.

I take the stock on a straight drive for a while and concentrate on staying ahead of them. If they turn on their own, I move over to stay in front of them if I have to. When I see they are comfortable with this, I turn a little to check and see if they will follow. If they don't, the person or dog driving can work the opposite side to help the stock to follow the turn. Practice turns like this until they follow the turn well and want to follow on their own.

It is important that the handler driving not pressure them to turn if they are turning on their own. They adjust so they are in position to encourage them to keep moving. Cattle are rewarded for following this way. Once stock are leading well, all the lead rider needs to do is show the way and be conscious of not slowing or turning the movement.

Although stock can be trained to follow a leader (or be called), there will be times just a handler moving to the lead or calling them isn't enough incentive to get them to follow, especially if they really don't feel like going. Sometimes they run to a call and leave their calves. If this happens, return to driving them or get help from a dog or person to help drive them to you.

Good dogs are a great help in training a herd to follow and move.

Another method I've used to get stock comfortable with following me is to drive a herd for a ways until they have the idea to keep going. I do this in a big field. I go up the side and cut in behind about five or six animals in the lead and drive them on in the same direction the whole herd is going. The herd behind may slow or stop. While I'm driving these away, the rest will be looking at this and will sometimes just follow me and the five or six going away. If they don't, I have someone drive them from behind to encourage them to follow. I end up in the middle, and pretty soon they are following me. They get used to this idea soon.

Up and downhill or crossings

It is not uncommon for stock to stall when crossing a river or when going up or down steep inclines. Sometimes stock are being herded off riparian areas into the uplands, and they just don't want to line out and go up.

It is important that you keep your temper in these cases. It's important that stock remain real comfortable with your handling or you won't get them to stay and you'll be doing this again.

Realize the stock aren't doing this to aggravate you. They are either comfortable with your handling and just feel the way is closed to them or can't take the pressure of steep inclines or crossings and your handling pressure at the same time. Determine which it is.

If they aren't comfortable enough with your handling, then stop trying to get them up and practice pressure/release until they are. Take them someplace else and practice. They should all be good at pressure into their sides and going by you. They should also drive well. If they feel the way you want them to go is closed, be careful not to increase the heat on them. You have some options to get them there. Help them do it.

I don't just keep raising the pressure or even continue with moderate pressure for very long if they don't look like they will go. I may try getting them to go by riding lines behind. If that isn't getting good movement, then I zigzag or use direct pressure. I never allow a herd to not go the way I want (not a well handled bunch, anyway) but will change techniques to help them.

I work a stalled herd more from the middle and pressure the ones on the sides of me as I move the lead up. This gets the front to drive on and creates movement following behind it. If they still don't go, stop pressuring from behind **before** you end up crowding the back into the middle. Look at the situation and try to create an opportunity to help them in these cases.

To help them go ahead, quit driving them from the back end and go up to the front to direct pressure one or two leaders. At the front, you can control speed and direction better. As the front moves up, it helps to create an opening for the back to go, attracts them to go with the ones in front, and avoids crowding and jamming.

Shoving the back harder into the middle just creates more stress within the herd. They can't move ahead, because it is jammed with cows. Crowding and bumping creates real stress. Avoid creating this, or you will end up with a wreck.

If a rider goes up to the front and works the lead animals, riders in the rear should back off pressure a bit so the stock don't feel too trapped, especially at a place like a creek crossing. The person in the front should pressure the lead animals (ones facing the right direction across) into their sides. This will help clear the front and attract others to follow the movement.

Before heading out on the range

If you don't have a few facing the direction you want, then get farther up front and pressure a bit until some of them are looking at you. Then you can pressure directly into their sides and ask them to go ahead. Settle for just a step forward or a look in the right direction and release pressure if it's real hard for them to go. Stay in the same spot and go in and out in a smooth rhythm and keep asking them to make progress toward crossing. Stock will gauge the rhythm and move on by.

Too much pressure will tend to cause some stock to break back, so be attentive to how much pressure you can apply. Once some stock go on, others should follow with some light to moderate pressure applied by riders in the back.

When working alone, I've also been able to get stock across particularly difficult places when I couldn't work from the front by driving a few of the animals all or part of the way to where I wanted them to go.

I look for and pick the animals that were more inclined to go than the rest and worked them to go on. I also do this if I can't get the front animals to go and keep going—say they go 10 feet and stop, go 5 feet and stop like they sometimes do on a hot day going up or down a steep hill. I leave the rest to stay put and bring and place these bolder animals with more movement where I want them. I then go back and either drive the rest to them from the back or the front. I work from the front if I can, especially at difficult places.

If I'm driving a sizable herd and know I'm coming to a difficult place, I'll start picking up the pace before coming to the spot. I get them moving at a good walk and keep them going this way. By the time they get to the tough place, ones in the lead may slow and balk, but they will go because of the momentum of the herd. They have hundreds or perhaps a thousand coming behind them.

Use the movement of the herd to help keep them going in tough places but don't stress them by running them to get across.

One other valuable technique for getting a herd to go uphill or move is to have one or two riders go up the sides (outside the flight zone) and come back (inside the flight zone) against the direction they are going. One rider can go down the sides or two riders can go down the sides together on opposite sides. A good walk or a slow trot works well to speed them up in this case, but vary the pace depending on how the stock react.

This method can really speed the stock up so be careful not to overdo it. It works best to get animals speeded up when they are already walking, rather than already stopped, but it does work either way.

If the stock are stopped, I try to get them started again by direct pressure into their sides or walking against the direction they are facing. Be careful not to peel off animals as you go trotting by. Sometimes a head will turn to see you. Remember to go wider to the sides when you are returning to the front part of the herd. Get out of the flight zone on your way back up, or you'll slow the herd down more.



Notice the lead cows slow and stop when through the gate. Look for this to happen.

Going through gates

You can practice with animals taking pressure while distractions are going on to test their level of trust and understanding. I like to practice with stock going through gates.

When I think they are responding okay to different pressure cues, I'll take them through.

Maybe the first time, only the back part will go through quietly and the front veer will away. I will take the ones that went through out again with the whole herd and practice driving (going straight) and getting them more comfortable with going by me.

We try again. The next time most of them go through, but some hesitate, which isn't good enough. I want them **all** to go through the gate and slow or stop as they get in the corral.

So I take them around again. Next time they all go in.

Then I ask a few people to sit on the fence by the gate. I take the herd out the gate and around the field and drive them close by the fence to see how comfortable they are going by the people.

Some scamper by the first pass. We go around the field practicing again, and I take them close by the people again. They are better, but a few still aren't entirely comfortable, so we do it until they are. Then I take them through the gate, and they go through calmly and quietly. Lesson done.

The herd has learned to respond to my go-ahead pressure even under elevated or more distracting circumstances. If they hadn't, I would continue repeating the lesson as much as I needed to.

Taking all your animals through this type of training and practicing all the things you will need them to do will result in a remarkably manageable herd.

I like to put a person right in the gate with the gate mostly closed so the stock have to go within three feet or so from the person. There was a time on the ranch that a person would get chewed out for "blocking" the gate like this, and with the old way of thinking and working, rightfully so. But the stock should focus on the handler putting them through, not the potential distraction. They will do this. Try it. It helps make them real easy to sort at the gate when you have to.

The more practice and the better stock get at things like this, the better they will be at learning and doing other things, so time spent here is well worth it.

It takes some practice to get some stock to all go through a gate well. Even though they all go through, I'm not finished working with them until they slow after they are through the gate and go to grazing (if there's grass) just past the gate. If there isn't any grass, they slow and stop just through the gate unless I pressure them all the way through.

Before heading out on the range

A goal for going through a gate lesson could be “I would like to see them with their heads down and grazing after they go through a gate “every time.” I want them that comfortable.

If I load stock into a trailer, I want them to go in well. But I also practice that until they just stand in the trailer, with the gate open. Of course everyone may have a little different idea on what is okay for him or her. You might just need this degree of comfort on the range. Set your sights on remarkable control and calm stock.

Setting a standard for how well stock do things applies also to going up steep hills, across water, and many other things.

Even though stock may respond calmly and responsively to pressure in average situations after initial training, that doesn't necessarily mean they will when they are excited, tired and hot, bedded on a cold day, or have to go by people standing by the gate.

Just because the stock seem calm with you working them horseback doesn't mean they will be okay when you are on foot or when the dogs work them. Sometimes they don't want to slow if they are trying to get someplace.

We need to train our stock for these situations. We need them to respond well to us even when they are distracted or just don't feel like it.

Make sure the stock are well trained to the basics and then train them on horseback, on foot, or with dogs.

Don't give up or get discouraged by these situations if they act up when it's new. Increase your efforts and continue to ask them for the desired responses.

Once the stock are coming along, you can also practice getting them good at responding well in all situations by working them when they are in a higher level of excitement or potential distraction.

If stock are in a situation that makes it hard to listen when training, move them to a place where they can. Try to replace what they are doing with something you want them to do. This is an important training tool.

Don't try to stop them from doing what they are doing, such as running off or not moving well. Change it by letting them know it's not getting them anywhere, and then ask them to do something that you want them to do.

In order to achieve ever-increasing control over stock, work on improving your attitude about allowing things to happen.

chapter ten

Making a grazing plan work

Meeting riparian stubble height standards set by government managing agencies is perhaps the greatest concern for associations on many grazing allotments.

Agencies require that riparian areas be in good condition, so they set standards that must be met by permittees. When not met, they threaten or take administrative action. This can include increasing stubble height standards, reducing stock numbers, shortening the length of grazing season, and sometimes closing an allotment.

So agency staff turns up the heat on ranchers, who in turn light a fire under the riders, who in turn chase the cattle. This almost never works to a satisfactory end, but it's tradition.

Upland range usually has maximum percent utilization, and riparian areas have minimum stubble height standards. These standards usually aren't averaged across these areas, so both must be met on every grazing unit.

Riparian problems

Typically, when stock are moved to a new grazing unit, they usually start grazing the riparian vegetation first. When riparian vegetation is grazed to the set "trigger" stubble height, ranchers are required to move the stock to the next fence, which usually results in leaving a great deal of upland forage ungrazed. So the herd moves through the rotation quickly, based more or less on how fast they use up the riparian areas.

Every conventionally handled herd has its share of riparian loafers and herd quitters that hide out from the main group in creeks or meadows. Some will leave the range early, headed for home.

Riparian loafers are usually the greatest concern. They stay even when feed is limited. No amount of traditional riding can prevent this behavior with some animals in time to prevent problems. Even with a herd of 1,500 pairs, all it takes to grub out the creek bottoms is 20-40 animals that park on the creek bottoms as soon as the herd is moved in.

Making a grazing plan work

If an association does manage to graze a unit and meet standards, they usually miss some animals after the herd is moved to another unit. Back-riding is rarely 100 percent successful. The 20 or 60 pairs that get left behind quickly graze it to below standards.

Back-riding consumes a lot of time as cattle are typically spread out over a large grazing area, bunches here and there, some in the creek bottoms or up in mountain meadows or hanging around the springs. Riders have great difficulty trying to control this situation.

Agencies often require that when creeks are grazed to within a certain stubble height (for example, five inches), riders move the stock so they can meet the four-inch standard by the time all stock are gathered and moved.

One of a rider's priorities is to get as much grazing time for the association in a unit as he can. So he prowls the creeks, busts stock out of the riparian areas and runs them up the mountain. Some, however, will be back in the creek bottom after he leaves. Some might even beat him back down the mountain.

Whether it's riparian loafing or cows quitting the range and leaving early for home, the cost to ranchers is high. Many associations in central Idaho have to feed hay or feed them off haylands. Feeding a herd of 1,500 pairs hay versus staying another day on range can cost, conservatively, about \$1,000 per day.

Some good riders have proven they can get a few more weeks to a month of grazing out of the same allotment simply by handling the stock differently. This is a potential savings of between \$15,000 to \$30,000 to an association in one season just in hay costs.

Good riders can save an association a lot of money when you combine the costs of shortened grazing seasons or cuts in numbers. This is true on public or private lands, because a well managed herd under high control can also produce more forage for the future.

Traditional methods of handling indirectly lead to lots of over-rested upland plants, crusted soils, and some overgrazed riparian areas that lower range productivity.

Riparian loafing solutions

Riparian areas and seeps, springs and meadows have green grass, shade and water—all attractive and important to livestock. They stay in these areas long-term because of the way we handle them.

These cattle have experienced that staying in the riparian areas is profitable. Calves imitate their cows and get into this habit, but poor handling created the experience in the cows initially.

Just as handling caused the riparian loafing problem, handling can fix it. But as Albert Einstein once said, "The thinking required to solve this problem will have to be on a different level than what created it."

Riparian loafing behavior in cattle isn't a problem. It's a matter of perception of where the cattle feel safe. The solution lies in changing the way the cattle are handled **everywhere**.

Cattle, like horses, **do not** reason. They only assimilate experiences.

Riders say they handle the riparian loafing problem by making the wrong place difficult. With a horse, undesirable behavior can be discouraged by making the experience "not profitable." The idea for solving many horse-handling problems is to make the right thing easy and the wrong thing hard or miserable.

For example, if my stock horse wants to wiggle around when I tighten up the cinch because he doesn't like it, I wiggle the hackamore (bosal) side to side and put him right back to where he was standing.

The horse experiences that wiggling gains him nothing and, in fact, makes it worse. He subsequently experiences the contrast that he has a safe place, which is standing still, just where he was first being cinched up. Horses will choose this relaxation and also associate it with that spot. This invariably helps to get the horse to stand still for cinching up.

Riders, however, have been making the riparian areas hard or miserable for cattle for years without success.

What's the difference between making it miserable for the wiggling horse or the riparian loafing cow?

The riders are forgetting the first part of the horseman's rule: They aren't making the right thing (staying in the uplands) easy, just the wrong thing hard. This leaves the cattle with no contrast in options. They have no other safe place, so they fall back on the last safe place they knew.

If you want cattle to quit hiding in riparian areas, you have to create another safe place where they can have security and be comfortable.

Now, cattle don't care where they are—uplands versus riparian areas. It makes no difference to them! Calm, well handled cattle, that is. I know this is true, because when I handle riparian loafing cattle differently than they were handled before, they stay in the uplands.

So the difference between riparian loafing cattle and the horse is that we don't have to train the stock to quit loafing in the creek like we trained that horse to stop wiggling. What's required is to

remove the **reason** that cattle are seeking relief from stress in the riparian area. Knowing this, solving the riparian loafing problem is simple.

You can change the cows' experience that riparian areas are the safe place by making uplands seem safe and comfortable. This eliminates their need to hide out there. They will no longer need this place for a sense of security.

The object of good stockmanship is to create the experience in the minds of the cattle that being in a herd and going everywhere is safe and comfortable. Then we can settle the herd (take the movement out of them) wherever we decide is best.

If an association is having problems with stock grazing an even proportion of a grazing unit, place them in the under-utilized areas.

If stock are hanging out in the creek bottoms and over using them, I suggest you place them in the uplands.

If you're driving stock to another pasture, show them the area you want them to water. Stop there on the way to the uplands where you will place them. Let them drink and comfortably move them on. They will use this area to drink from then on.

I don't know of any association that has range riparian areas that is having trouble with the herd loafing in the uplands. But if you did, you can place them in the creek bottoms if you like. Either way, placing cattle is an ideal—and sometimes the only way—to graze an even proportion of all the range.

You quickly erase the reasons for cattle wanting to loaf in riparian areas if you start cattle right, drive them right as a herd, place them in the uplands, and move them off riparian areas properly.

Summary

Don't make being in the wrong place (the riparian area) difficult for cows. Make leaving it comfortable for them. Make being in the herd and everywhere they go comfortable. Then place them properly where you want them. Let cattle experience that the rider's approach, the gather off the creek, the drive to and stopping on the new place is profitable for them.

All of these things are readily done by using the techniques and methods in this book. The stock then experience that it is profitable to leave the riparian area and **very profitable** to stay in the uplands. This will be the end of riparian loafing problems.

Remember one key point in achieving success with cattle: How you approach them and what you do first with them in the very beginning sets the tone for the entire day.

If a drive starts out with a lousy experience for the cows, you're going to have to erase it and try to drive them. The new place to stay can be steep and rocky or hot and flat with coarse feed and they won't care, as long as they were handled right getting there.

The stock shouldn't perceive any spot on the range as the place to hide out from riders and stress. There should be no stress anywhere on the range as a result of handling by riders.

Handled this way, stock will stay where you place them. On the uplands, let's say. It has become free of stress, free of any pressure, and you took the movement out of them. They have feed, salt, water, and the security of the herd. Their calves are with them.

What would draw them away from that? Coyotes probably won't. Wolves or eventually running out of feed will, but nothing common on the range should draw them away from that place.

Make your cattle a herd

Controlling the time plants are exposed to grazing animals is key to protecting and enhancing all the range. Riders can't control a bunch that's scattered, so you may decide you want stock on the range to be a herd.

Using the methods in this book, riders will rekindle the herd instinct—even animals that are bad about quitting the herd.

When the herding instinct is rekindled and the herd drives well, you can control the results of grazing to a very high degree. You can place the herd one day, move them to another place the next. Where you find one, you'll find them all. All will stay, and all will go. A high proportion of plants can be grazed with less possibility of overgrazing. Show them water, place them where you want, and this place becomes the place they want to stay. Where you showed them water is where they will want to go to drink. Livestock will stay in uplands, go to the creek to drink, and then return to the herd. Riparian areas, then, are also protected from overgrazing.

Stop them from leaving the range early

Stock that decide when to move to the next pasture or head for home from the range is another common complaint.

It can be corrected using the same proper handling as dealing with bunch quitters and riparian loafers. Take the stress off by handling them right, taking the movement out of them, and placing them where you want.

Cattle have a powerful trait: They don't separate the location of all things around them with the handling experience. The reason they stay where you place them isn't completely understood, but

it happens consistently when they are handled properly and placed correctly.

It is likely that part of this response is due to the release of all pressure from the handler and the stock's association of the place where this happened. Similar behavior appears in horses.

One time, I had trouble getting a colt to move his shoulder (front left foot) to the left. He would back up instead. I finally got him to do it, but had trouble getting it again. So I waited until he came around to the exact spot in the arena that he first did it. When we hit that spot I asked again, and he did it quite readily.

Horses to a high degree—and cattle to some degree—associate the spot on the land with a training or handling experience.

Proper handling replaces experiences that were prompting cattle to leave early.

Too much help



"When old Slim helps us work cattle it's jest like losing four good men."

For riders who want to get more days out of each paddock, have calves that gain well and don't get sick, make sure that everyone who works the herd uses good stockmanship.

Day riders who handle the stock roughly can quickly undo the progress made by a dedicated rider.

Being handled well one time and roughly the next is also hard on the cattle. Stock can be reworked to handle well again, but it takes time to regain their trust and take the stress off.

If unskilled riders show up to help, have them spread salt, fix fence, trap gophers, go for parts, tend camp, shoe horses, or wax the pickup. I don't loan my highly trained, light and supple stock horse out to someone who jerks on him or rides like a sack of spuds, because I did that once.

If association members who are hard on the stock insist on coming out to help, I have no solutions, just empathy. The boss may not always be right, but they are always the boss.

The best advice I have: Handle the herd so well that you don't need help. If unskilled riders do help, position yourself and work to correct the worst of what happens. Then do your best to take the stress off them when they leave, find an association or ranch that practices good stockmanship and work for them.

Combining different brands into one herd

It's common among grazing associations to have each member turn out his or her herd at different times onto an allotment. Sometime they also turnout in different locations.

This creates a hardship for the rider. Making these brands one herd requires having the whole herd together and enough time left over to drive them as a herd. It has to be done in one day or it's likely the herd will scatter overnight—different brands going different places.

Making a grazing plan work

There are a few key things to keep in mind if you want different brands to become a herd.

First: The ideal solution is for the association and riders to meet and develop a plan to coordinate turnout. Everyone's stock should arrive at the agreed-to time and place. The time period should be no longer than what the riders can hold the cattle in the area without causing overgrazing. The place should be an easy location to drive a whole herd.

If you don't do this, riders will be moving the main herd on and will then have to go back when new bunches arrive. They will have to gather and trail each new bunch to join the main herd. Then they will have to drive all the stock together to make them one herd. Riders who tend to two or more bunches can get too spread out.

Second: Place a priority on training everybody's herds prior to turnout. At a minimum, all herds should be comfortable with pressure into their sides and going by the handler. You can also get them better at turning and speeding up during the drive there. Make sure they are driven to the allotment with good movement.

For association members, don't dump buzzed-up stock on your new riders and expect them to fix it all on the range.

Third: Herds from different ranches won't want to associate together, even if they've all been handled well. To fix this, put each of the individual groups into one herd and work or drive them as a herd. You'll have to drive them well together sometimes for an hour or more until you see them all come together.

When I see individual groups following animals from other herds and running closer together, and they no longer appear polarized and are moving well together, I'm confident they are becoming one herd.

You can get individual groups to become one herd either on one big coordinated drive to the allotment or after they get to the allotment.

Having one coordinated drive is a good way to do it. Otherwise, riders will have to pull each group in as they can and go for a drive. This takes lots more time.

Cattle associate the place and the situation in which they experience comfortable handling, like being with the herd.

Different brands, handled together well as one herd, will soon incorporate themselves into this whole herd.

Note for association members: If you don't have a herd that's already staying together, don't expect a few inexperienced riders to be able to gather, drive, and place a thousand head or more in one day, especially in rough, steep terrain.

Don't expect inexperienced riders, however dedicated, to be able to place big herds consistently on the range for a year or two without timely follow-up training and good support.

Associations should provide help to the riders so a gather and drive can be done in one day to get the herd together and worked right once and for all. Too few riders can easily run out of horse or daylight trying to make a major gather and drive. Even with well-trained stock, moving a large herd through steep or timbered country can be a lot of work for a few beginning riders.

The biggest gains in efficiency and effectiveness for riders come from good planning, good communications, and practicing good stockmanship.

Major moves

I'm sure there is an upper limit to the number of cattle that one experienced handler can move. I don't know what that limit is, but if riders can't handle moving the entire herd on to another area, they should move just manageable portions and come back for the rest. They should place these groups as already described. They will still be there when they show up again.

The association riders may need to help with major moves. Just make sure that everyone handling the stock is on board with low stress handling. A few good riders are better than lots of high stress riders.

If an association is fortunate enough to have a rider who can be given the responsibility to make on-the-ground decisions and coordinate other hired help, use this to your advantage as much as possible. It will help reduce the time you have to spend meeting and helping them out. Good riders usually know the best thing to do and when to do it.

Associations should make sure their riders attend the appropriate agency team meetings, have good maps of the allotment and are clear on the range plan, range standards, and the team goal.

Bunch quitters on the range

Sometimes you'll show up the next day to find the herd you had placed is gone—and gone far. Maybe a few are missing; maybe all. You had at least some animals that were uncomfortable in the herd and with your handling, so they left overnight.

If you notice stock that are not comfortable with the herd, and if you have your hands full tending to the bulk of the herd that's inclined to stay put, then leave the bunch quitters separated away from the main herd. Cut them out or let them leave without letting the others go. Keep them as a second group and locate them well away from

the good handling group, so they don't draw animals from the main herd and have them moving away from where you want them. This allows riders to concentrate on working with problem animals as they are able.

Problem animals can be identified as the ones that drift away or distance themselves from the others. There will often be some that are inclined to follow, the others that would just as soon stay. As these "problem" animals handle well, they can be returned to the main herd.

If you don't know which animals are the bunch quitters, say someone else returned them and they are mixed in, drive the herd a ways until it has had the distance and time to sort out where they want to be in the herd position.

The leaders have the longest flight zone. That's why they put themselves there. They are also usually the most sensitive and the first to quit the bunch from bad handling and the last to be comfortable with good handling.

So, after driving the herd a short ways, ride up the side and cut off the back two thirds from the front third, or back three-quarters from the front quarter. You might separate some that are good about staying, but you will likely get all the bunch quitters. Drift the lead bunch someplace out of sight and sound of the main herd until you have worked them enough that they quit wanting to be someplace else.

Drive this group on until you see the animals in the back wanting to slow or stop. Keep dropping the calm ones off as you go, if you want. This narrows down which animals are still uncomfortable with handling. Keep this up until the last ones are comfortable with all that you ask them to do. Then drift them all back to the herd.

Return bunch quitters with the straight line technique

Strays or bunch quitters usually left the herd because they are sensitive animals and don't want people around.

If I come upon some that have quit the herd and are hanging out in a new location, I approach and watch them carefully. If they are hot and ready to take off, I begin training them exactly as I would start training a sensitive animal that I had never worked before (see page 92).

If they are calmer and more responsive, the starting point might be as described near the beginning of Chapter Nine (see page 87).

When the animals are responding well to pressure and somewhat comfortable with your handling, you can start drifting them back to the herd. This is also a good way to finish getting them comfortable with your handling while still going a direction you want.

Work straight lines behind in order to facilitate a slow drift back into the herd. There should be no crowding the ends or curves in the pattern that will stress them. If they aren't too far from the herd, let them move at a slow pace and graze back. If they are far away, start out by drifting, then drive them with good movement, then drift them in as you get close to the main bunch.

The most effective technique to use is probably straight lines behind the herd. It places you in the right position all the time and prevents stress on the animals.

If you get good movement (or bad) when nearing the main herd, you may have trouble getting them to stop and stay, as they will likely still be thinking about traveling on through or leaving the bunch later.

Bad movement is when cows are weaving, turning, crowding, bumping or leaving the group as you work them. It is a handler-caused problem that you can correct by watching more carefully and changing what you are doing until it stops.

As you get better at handling, it's possible to work with a group or even individual bunch quitters one time. If you do it right, that will be the last time they will need to be worked. Sometimes it takes only minutes. Sometimes it takes a few sessions over the course of a few days or more.

After enough proper handling, former bunch quitters should move with their calves and be relatively calm. You should see a marked improvement in how relaxed they are.

If you can't achieve this, don't return them to the main herd that is staying together!

Heading off potential bunch quitters

To head off potential bunch quitters and settle the herd, back way off and watch them. Look to see if all the movement is completely out of **all** the animals and that none want to leave and hide.

Sometimes even calm animals that stay still have moving on their minds, especially after a long drive. With these, think about driving them more until you see them want to slow when you ease off. Then drift them into where you want them to stay again.

Sometimes animals aren't completely comfortable with handling and being in the herd. They may graze and take a step, graze and take a step like they are sneaking off and start others going with them. They are thinking about someplace else. Sometimes they need just a bit more handling, and they will be alright. Sometimes you

need to work them more by driving with the herd or working them individually.

If you see individuals wandering off that need more work, go out and ask them with quiet and easy movements to turn and go back into the herd. Watch them afterwards to see if they have you on their minds and turn back to the herd, instead of wandering.

When they turn back to the herd, back off and watch. If they drift off again, do it a second time and watch. If they do it a third time, try something else.

Some animals appear rather quiet and calm. aren't afraid of you, and respond okay to most things you ask them to do. But they are still too bugged about past experiences to stay placed and eventually wander away.

A rider who thinks, watches, and checks the animals will find the things that concern them and the answer to correcting it. Perhaps they aren't yet comfortable with being handled in a herd or think they should keep moving because of past experiences.

I would probably pack them up and go for a drive on the range to find out what's wrong. How long a drive depends on when they show they are comfortable with everything I ask. They should slow or stop and relax when I back off pressure, even slightly.

Check that they will let you go up the sides. All should slow, stop and stand calmly, with their attention on you. They should all be calm and responsive when pressured from different angles, etc.

Watch and see if they want to get ahead or off to the side of the herd and want to be with their calves. If they do, I might slow or stop them and let the back catch up. Let them relax and mother up when all together.

Repeat until they want to stay with the herd.

More tips:

- Don't jam cattle during the drive.
- Don't cause them to weave.
- Don't drive cows into cows.
- Keep the movement constant and straight through the whole herd. There should be no speed up/slow down or start/stop movement.
- If individuals want to take side trails, ask them to turn back into the bunch and relax yourself a bit when they do or go with them and work them more.
- Check to see that no animal is single-minded on being someplace else or away from the herd, bent on taking a certain direction, or doesn't care much about her calf.
- When you drive the herd, go back and forth properly so the lead animals line out and the others flow in behind.

Start the drive and maintain it with a reasonably compact herd, not a strung out or spread out mob. If they are too spread out, movement won't attract movement and lead animals might still be acting on their own thoughts. Animals on the sides might also be making their own decisions about where they should be. They won't experience that driving with and being with the herd when you are handling them is okay. When all are calm and responsive with no thoughts of making decisions on their own, they should be ready to place.

Signs are obvious when cattle want to stay—they start getting a little harder to move. If you give them any opportunity to slow or stop, they will.

Making a grazing plan work

If you let them stop, some will bed down within a few minutes. Others will just stand in one spot and chew their cud or otherwise stand very relaxed and look straight ahead. Any of the others should be standing and/or grazing around them. They should be biting plants and looking for other plants they can graze while in that spot. This is a bunch that should stay.

It is something of an art to know for sure whether a herd will stay or not. Take the time to observe and look for signs before you go back to camp.

Placing cattle can be done many ways. The keys are:

- Never let them believe they are under restraint.
- Start the drive right.
- Never force anything to happen.
- Do whatever you need to let them experience that what they prefer to do is profitable for them.
- Don't bother or frighten the herd while driving them to where you want them to stay.
- Work them right until they will stop when you let them.
- Face animals in different directions so there is no particular orientation to the herd.
- Space them out so they have enough feed for the length of stay.

Culling sensitive animals

Some of the more sensitive animals that have the idea ingrained of going someplace else or staying in riparian areas may be candidates for culling. The expertise to handle some of these animals may take months or a year for riders to gain.

The time you may have to spend with these problem animals might not be the best use of time available, especially if a few are over-using critical resources like riparian areas or jeopardizing management of the main herd.

Keep in mind, though, that when you find a group that quit the herd or loaf in the creeks, it will probably contain some animals that really are comfortable within a herd. They might have left because they were drawn by others leaving.

If you're considering taking them home, you probably don't need to take the whole group. Work the group and look for the ones that are quiet and calm. They will probably be in the back and are okay to keep as they will likely get calm enough with handling them right for just a little longer.

Placing stock

When placing stock, you can expect that it's possible to get them to stay there all day or more. Depending on the length of drive, temperature and time of day, they might want to graze or go to water sooner or later. If they are thirsty, I like to water them first before placing them. Even if they aren't thirsty, show the watering place prior to placing them.

Sometimes they aren't hungry or thirsty, so most of them lay down or stand still when I place them. Check the herd later and get them up if it's gone beyond the time they should be grazing.

I recommend that you place or leave the herd at a low enough density so they will stay put for the length of time you require—and a little longer. Estimate the feed available on the area to keep them there for the time you wish and spread the herd out accordingly.

If your range produces about 400 total pounds of forage per acre and you want to take about half of that and you have 500 pair of beef cattle you want to stay for the day, you might have to spread them out on about 80-100 acres. They will drift some off this area, but it's a minimum area to place them on.

Monitor and watch to see what happens. Move if you need to or stay longer if you want to get a higher proportion of plants grazed.

Don't stay longer than the time it takes for grazed plants to send up enough regrowth to entice stock to graze them again. In some places, plants could regrow enough in three to four days for this to happen.

Placed stock should be close enough, however, to be able to keep a significant number of the rest of the herd in sight. If stock are placed tighter than they should be to have all the feed they need, their performance may suffer. Well-handled stock will sometimes stick around pretty close. Get them up and move them if they should be feeding and aren't.

After all the stock are calm and responsive, bunch quitters are under control, and driven so they are now one herd and placed, it's helpful to establish a pattern of moving them on to fresh feed when the riders show up.

Riders should arrive early in the morning so they can catch the herd before it gets up to graze. Note the herd's feeding times and get there before the first one of the day. You can also do this before the evening feed if you like.

If the drive to a new grazing area is a long distance away, allow them to drift graze while still heading in the direction you want.

A few days to a week of this and the herd will anticipate the rider moving them on to feed. Cows will know its time to move and will go get their calves. The herd will start coming together and anticipate the move.

If you catch them when they have started feeding, they can be a bit harder to move long distances. In this case, you may want to let them feed for an hour or so before making a long drive. The main idea is to show the herd you are there to show them new feed. You take them there, settle them comfortably and it's a good place. Stock learn real soon it's a good deal.

I often move a herd to fresh feed the night before, say around 7 PM, let them feed there all night, then place them on a new place around 10 AM the next day. They will stay all day on this area very nicely.

Longer moves on hot summer days are best done in early morning.

If you have stock on a riparian area or watering place, make sure you allow them adequate time to drink before driving them up the mountain. Cattle may need time to drink, relax, and then drink again.

If well handled stock leave the herd to drink on their own, they will return to the uplands on their own shortly after watering. Their desire to be with the main herd and that place will drive them back to it.

Pass Creek: A short story about bunch quitters

I went out to an allotment one morning to check grazing results on a creek of particular concern. Six-inch stubble height standards had to be met on this one, and it was nearing the planned move time.

Riders had placed stock on high meadows above the creek, and they were staying there. They had been doing this successfully for two weeks.

This day I came upon about 10 pairs and some yearlings that had just moved in and were starting to graze the creek edges. The creek was grazed enough, and we didn't want it used any more so standards could be met. The whole bunch was scheduled to be moved the next day, but even 10 pair for the rest of the day in that area was undesirable. I knew the riders were elsewhere, and it would be a while before they showed up.

As I came down the mountain, the stock ran off before I got a quarter mile from them. By their behavior, they had quit the bunch because they weren't comfortable in the herd and were looking for another place to be. I decided I would get them handling better for the riders so they would be easy to rejoin with the main herd. I would set them in the uplands so they could be found easily and wouldn't graze the creek any more.

After they took off, I followed them for about a third of a mile, just trailing behind. They were out of sight, but they knew I was still behind them. They stopped in a meadow and stood facing my direction, looking for me. I stopped too late as I came over the rise, so they spooked and took off.

I followed behind again. They slowed and stopped a few minutes later and looked at me. So I stopped and just stood there for a minute. They relaxed a little.

I approached at a flat angle and gradually got closer and closer until a few heads went up high. I stopped and backed off. In a minute or two they relaxed a bit, so I went back and forth in straight lines, edging a few yards closer each pass. On the last pass about 60 yards out, two heads went up, so I stopped and backed off. They relaxed, and I went back and forth the same way again.

Now I was about 30 yards out. One head went up, so I stopped and backed off. When this animal relaxed, I resumed edging closer, walking back and forth. They turned and walked off. I backed off all pressure and let them go.

I went with them after they moved off about 20 yards. They stopped soon and I got within about 15 yards from them. Most faced me. I backed up a few steps, and a few heifers took a step towards me. I went back and forth again, and all but one calf turned and walked away calmly.

The calf turned her head and looked straight back at me. I was too far back or too much behind it for its comfort, so I went out wide to the side and moved up, toward the direction the herd had gone. It followed me with its eyes, straightened her head, saw the herd, and calmly walked off to join them.

I went back and forth behind them to keep the movement going. While driving them, one calf decided it must take a left turn toward the creek, and the rest followed. I just let them all go, all the while asking them to just keep moving.

They were getting relatively relaxed by now, so I asked the calf that was leading the bunch to turn right by moving myself out wider to the left. It didn't turn, so I kept driving them forward. A few minutes later I asked again, and it turned. I drove them on, zigzagging and using direct pressure on any that wanted to slow.

By now, they had to be driven to keep them moving. Feed was looking short everywhere along the valley bottom, so I drove them around to find a spot with enough feed for the day. Everything within walking distance had been well grazed, so I decided to put them someplace that was at least easy for a rider to locate.

As we were headed to where I wanted them, a cow decided to turn right and headed straight back to where I had first picked them up. About half the others followed her. The other half just stayed put and watched.

I went up the sides to slow her, but she just kept marching so I stayed along her side. She eventually slowed, and I immediately moved out wider away. When I did this, she stopped. I waited a minute or two then moved across in front of her and went back and forth in straight lines. She and the others walked off nicely, and I drove them back to the others and on we went.

She took off again, half-heartedly, back towards the creek but this time nobody joined her. I went with her until she returned back to the herd when I asked.

As we came in to where I wanted them to stay, I backed off pressure from my position behind them and let them slow. They kept moving, so I went up the sides and they all stopped. I turned the front animals so they faced different directions. All of them looked very relaxed, so I left. I had placed them directly under a steep cliff with a distinctive tall spire of rock.

I had more monitoring work to do in the area, and two hours later I spotted them from a ridge across the valley. To my enormous satisfaction, they hadn't moved from that spot. I drove on and eventually ran into the rider late that afternoon. I told her I had found stock on the creek that morning and had put them under the spire. She said she would go get them that night.

Later that night an association member who had been on the allotment called me about another matter. "By the way," I asked him, "Did the rider get those stock I located above the creek?" He said he had gone with her to pick them up earlier that night and move them to another area. I asked if they had found them standing under the cliff face, just outside a patch of aspen and below a spire of rock. He said, "Yes, as a matter of fact, they were right there."

A few weeks later I asked the rider if she remembered those cattle. She confirmed they were right below the spire. She thanked me for the help but wanted to know why the heck I picked that spot to place them. I said so she could find them easily. She said, "Yeah, but you put them 10 yards away from a coyote den with pups in it." She couldn't believe the cows hadn't moved from it, especially with calves among them.

I only see cows when I work cows. Still, I didn't believe I was dumb enough to place them on top of a den. But they stayed in spite of that, which just tickled me to death.

What's important to cattle isn't what we might think.

Placing stock

These animals quickly went from real spooky to easy to handle. They stayed put on a spot with little grass and on top of a coyote den for over eight hours. It took about 35 minutes from the time I spotted them to the time I placed them.

I may have put them in a dumb spot, but I didn't do a lot of things wrong with them. It had a tremendous effect on the stock. One of the reasons I was so careful (subconsciously, probably) is because I didn't have a horse so I didn't get in a hurry and nobody was watching me. Time didn't matter.

During the course of handling these animals to stay where I wanted them, I showed that I wasn't aggressive. Nothing I did forced them to do anything. They could go where they felt they should until they wanted to do what I prompted them to do. I made no noise, no fast movement, and worked them with my hands at my side.

At first, I showed them that taking off wasn't profitable by just following them. When they understood this, I showed them all I wanted to do was get closer. I did this by working back and forth in straight lines, edging closer each pass.

By retreating and waiting quietly when they got nervous before they took off, I showed them pressure had a release and they could control it, calmly. Also, they could stand still and get relief from all the pressure. They saw I wasn't going to trap, force them, or be aggressive in any way.

I based what I did on the behavior of the most sensitive animal in the bunch. I helped the one that got nervous move ahead by moving to where it could see me and the herd it wanted to follow.

I showed them they could move calmly and pressure would be released. It became their experience.

I work every herd to experience these things before trying to place them.

The last thing I wanted to show the stock was that I wanted them to slow and stop. When they stopped. I left the area, which was a relief of all pressure to them.

If a herd doesn't stay after you've placed it, you haven't done these things well enough with any or all of them, and/or you may not have taken the movement out of them.

Canyon strategy

If you have long, steep-sided canyons with a riparian area in the bottom, consider grazing from top to bottom. Settle the stock at the higher part first. This makes it easier for stock to come to water and return to the uplands. They can drink and then just move sideways to get to upland feed instead of having to go uphill all the time to get into upland grass.

Train animals before turnout

Avoid the mistake some associations make of turning out big numbers of untrained stock on the range and expecting one or two relatively inexperienced low stress handling riders to make them a herd, keep them a herd, and place them. It won't happen. By the time a few riders get a big herd gathered into one bunch, they can be out of horse or daylight and never get the chance to work the herd as a whole.

Working the herd as a whole is often necessary to get different brands to come together and be one herd in one day. Otherwise the herd can spread out too far overnight, and you will lose many of them.

It's certainly possible to train big herds on the range, but it helps to be experienced at it first.

Achieving herd effect

Herd effect is a marvelous use of stock to create conditions on the range that promote increased productivity and diversity.

Herd effect is created by the placement of hooves without the stock having the choice or time to carefully place them around plants, as they do when grazing or moving comfortably with a herd.

Make sure a herd first stays together, drives and turns real well before doing this.

Move the herd at a walk to the place wanted. Get good movement and keep it. Have a lead herder or two turn the lead animals inward and toward the back of the herd. Have the outside edges follow in. Have the rear and back handlers send these middle animals coming back up the outsides and until the area is covered.

Animals turning this way are unstressed, but they will give you the impact you need. They tromp brush and dead standing matter into the ground and break up crusts as they turn. Stock don't have to be running to get this type of impact. What you want is them turning as a tight mass so they have little choice about where their hooves land.

You can also take a big herd and turn it left or right 180 degrees, like a roll back on a horse. Turn them pretty tight, and they will likely give you the herd effect you desire. The idea is to have them moving close enough to other animals that they can't choose where they place their feet. Keep turning them in circles or loops until the area is affected like you want.

They're back...running a rotational system without fences

I had about 300 acres of rangeland I needed to graze and had made a deal with my neighbor to use some of his herd. It was my intent to rotationally graze my range by placing cattle where I wanted them, have them stay there about three days or until I moved them, then move them to another spot and so on.

Getting them on the right pasture

I rode out to get the cattle and found them bedded in some bottom ground about two miles away. All the feed was gone there and had been for some time, but the owner still hadn't had any luck getting them to graze the uplands. I told him I would try.

I approached the bunch carefully and at an angle to reduce the chance they would run off too quickly. When I got about 60 yards away, some jumped up and looked at me with high heads and bug-eyed looks. I backed away, but they all took off at a trot anyway. I let them get ahead of me for a minute, and they went straight up the foothill of a mountain and through the rocks.

I followed directly behind them (in line with the lead cows) and rode slower than they were going. I kept myself directly behind the lead cow so they didn't think I was chasing them for about a quarter of a mile.

The lead cow and some others started turning their heads in order to see me, which made them slow down. They soon stopped and looked back at me. So I stopped, backed up a step and watched them. When they relaxed a bit, I rode straight lines back and forth, edging closer each pass.

They started off again and ran a bit, so I let them get away a little and then followed directly behind again.

They soon stopped again, so I stopped. But now one or two wanted to break back to where I picked them up. I went back and forth perpendicular to the direction I wanted them to go, and they went on. This time they walked off, so I quit pressuring.

I went back and forth behind them in straight lines to encourage them to keep going. When they slowed too much, I went to riding a zigzag pattern behind them. Whenever they reached the right pace I eased pressure by holding back and just walking back and forth in straight lines.

At one point, the lead cow started to circle back to the right, so I eased out wide to the right and she turned back in. Immediately after she

Making a grazing plan work

turned, I went back to being behind the herd again, zigzagging. After going about a mile and a half they were working much better.

I was now driving them up a fence line which was off to their left, so I was riding a straight line offset about 45 degrees to the fence from about the middle of the herd to a point in back. The fence (in combination with my pressuring them) was pushing them right a little, so I needed to ride this way to offset this affect. If I ran lines straight back and forth behind them, they would veer away from the fence to the right.

When the herd approached the gate to my pasture, I stepped to the left and pressured a little until I caught the left eye of the lead cows. They noticed the gate and me, so they turned left into the open gate. The lead went through okay but about 10 stopped at the gate. So I went up the left side toward the gate and pressured directly into their sides. They went right through.

Once through, they all ran down the mountain. I followed right behind, and they slowed to a walk in a few minutes.

I worked them on a flat at the bottom of the mountain (because that is where they decided to go) for about an hour. By then, they all turned well when I stepped straight out from behind them and wide to the sides, slowed down when I went up the sides toward the front, moved straight ahead when I pressured directly into their sides, and moved at a comfortable walk together as I drove them.

I missed a calf

I decided these stock were handling good enough for the day, so I put them into a corral to show them water. Then I noticed one cow had a bag. I hadn't seen a calf when I picked them up, and she hadn't acted like she had one. She was looking for it now, so I rode back to find it.

I couldn't find the calf in the big thick greasewood patch, so I went back to the corral to get the cow. I decided to let the whole bunch go back instead so the cow wouldn't be alone with her calf and inclined to leave it for too long to be with the rest.

I drove them up the mountain to the gate. I stopped at the gate and let the cow with the missing calf just lead them back. They all lined out after her, and she took them all the way back beyond where I first picked them up. I left the gate open and rode back.

The next day as I was getting ready to go back and get them, my wife said not to bother. The whole bunch was coming back through the gate.

Indeed, they did all come back, except for the cow with the new calf. They had traveled over two miles up the mountain and back into our pasture all by themselves. I rode back and checked on the cow and calf. It was a little weak and dinky to make the trip, so I let them both stay there for a time.

My grazing plan

The range consisted of a 40-acre center piece, a north pasture and a south pasture of about 200 acres each. My original plan was to graze cows on the 40-acre piece for a short time, then turn them back into the south pasture where they first came from. The north pasture had no water; the fences were bad on one side and open to the mountains on the other.

To start them grazing, I moved them out of the corral to graze the center piece and watched to see where they would go. For the first three and a half days those cattle grazed only the areas where I had worked (handled) them on the first day, so I didn't have to place them.

This was behavior I had never seen before. Perhaps it was just coincidence, but it was interesting. This was a small area of the pasture, perhaps seven acres or less, but it was the only area they would graze.

I decided it had been grazed enough on the fourth day, so I placed them on the middle third of the pasture. They all stayed and bedded down right there all day. I got them up that night, because by now I wanted them eating. From then on they used the middle portion for grazing.

They started to drift to the upper part in four or five days, so I settled them on there, and they used it for the rest of the time.

One day, a cow showed signs of being ready to calve. I thought she might want to go up the mountain into a draw, so I sorted her and about five others from the bunch for company and moved them through the upper gate.

They went back into the uplands on the south pasture for a few days. She calved and stayed, but four cows came back on their own back to the center pasture, just like what had happened with the first cow. The one cow with the new calf rejoined the bunch about a week later.

Now I started to believe the first time they came back wasn't an accident. They were just plain comfortable there. It was the handling that did it. The feed or water wasn't any better and there was no shade, but they had come back to the center pasture where they felt comfortable.

Any of the stock could go wherever they wanted at any time. I always left the gates open, and they knew that. Many of the fences were down in places anyway, except on the roadside.

Since these cows were behaving so well, I decided to see if I could graze all three pastures in a rotation. I wanted a high proportion of places grazed at a low to moderate level of use. I decided to do this by placing them only. Water was located in a corral in the middle of a 40-acre pasture.

After they had grazed the pasture like I wanted, I moved them to the north pasture even though water and salt were located in the middle pasture. They all came in to get salt and water and went back to that part of the pasture where I had placed them—and didn't re-graze the old pasture in doing so.

After I had placed them on a part of a pasture, they were reluctant to leave that spot, but with quiet persistence, they would go.

When I settled them on new pasture, they didn't go back to re-graze the old place. On the two occasions that I didn't place them, they went back to re-graze old pasture. In this case, I just let them do what they wanted.

These cows stayed where I placed them throughout the four weeks they were there, except one evening when I was in a hurry to move them to a new place. They also stayed put on small areas of ground, smaller than I had thought they ever would.

Settling them on new places

I introduced the stock to new pasture or part of it by driving them there. I brought them around until we could drift into exactly where I wanted them. When they were spread out enough so I was sure they all had enough feed for the day and night, I went up the sides to slow and stop all movement. I turned them facing different directions, watched them for a minute, and left.

When placing stock didn't work

One day I moved them to another part of the north pasture and followed this same procedure, except that I only had about half an hour to do it. These were well-handled stock that would really work for me, but it was 95 degrees in the shade and my (wife's) horse was being a jerk. So I got off to settle them afoot, and a rattler nearly got me.

I stopped the herd where I wanted them, but a few wanted to drift. I knew others would soon follow. I kept turning them back in toward the main bunch, somewhat sharply after the first time or two. They would go back toward the others but soon drift back to the original and unwanted direction. I kept trying for another half an hour.

Now I was hungry and late, but I wanted them to stay. I wasn't going to let them screw up my record. I pressured some, pretty sharp now, to turn and go back. When I had them associated together again, I left.

Before I got back to the house, they had drifted from where I left them. They eventually ended up at the far end. I was pretty sore about this and told myself that I was going to get one of my legged up Arabians tomorrow. If they wanted to march, we would—uphill.

The next day I saddled up my Arabian but left myself with lots more time (all day if I needed it). I felt a little stupid, as I knew better than to handle stock with such a short fuse. I hadn't taken the movement out of the stock enough and made them anxious by pressuring too hard and acting mad.

They were in the corral for water that morning, so I brought the bunch from water on the center pasture to the north pasture. They went nicely through the gate into the pasture, but they wanted to go straight to the far end where they had drifted off to yesterday.

I let them go this way a minute or two and asked them to turn uphill and on up the base of the mountain. I drifted them in by switching from zigzagging to going back and forth in straight lines. They slowed.

As we got close, I went up the sides to the front and they all slowed and stopped. They stood quietly without wanting to take another step. After a minute or two, about half started grazing around themselves, taking short steps. The rest just stood there or bedded down. The ones grazing started to slightly drift graze in one direction but didn't attract others to follow. I gently asked them (yesterday I had told them) to turn in and face the others. They did, and I left.

The stock stayed in that exact spot about seven hours. Later that night, they moved about 150 yards around the spot and grazed very slowly back toward the center of it. The whole bunch came in to the center pasture for water, went back out the gate into the north pasture, turned uphill (exactly where I had turned them uphill before), and went back to the original place I had left them. One cow did go straight up the road but came back when she noticed she was alone.

They were on that spot for the next two days. They went back and forth to water once or twice each day, but returned to the spot I had placed them.

After grazing the lower and middle parts of the north range well, the stock started to drift up the mountain, so I let them. When it was all grazed properly, I moved them to the south pasture to finish the rotation.

It all went well. They stayed in the uplands and off the bottomland. The only time it didn't work was when I had a bad attitude and once when wolves chased them.

The cow that waited

I was in a neighbor's corral with some cows when feed had just been put out. I noticed one cow was having trouble, because she had porcupine quills in her muzzle. My neighbor said he would get her into the chute when he got around to it later. I offered to pull the quills out, and he said okay. I worked her away from the feed and other cows and set her by the gate, parallel to it.

Then someone came up with questions about a horse for sale, so I talked to him for a few minutes. When he left my wife noticed some cows were out of the field. It took me about 30 minutes to collect them and fix the fence.

I walked back into the corral, and the cow with the quills was still standing in the same spot. She hadn't even moved her feet during the time I'd been gone.

This has happened many times for shorter periods. I think most would stay put a long time.

I wish my horses would ground tie like that. Maybe they will when I get smarter.

Stampede

One time I was helping a crew of riders that included some who were handling the herd pretty well and a few that weren't. We had moved 1,200 pairs through the mountains 9 miles to new range and had them at a place in a canyon that necked down.

A rider who had been aggravating some stalled cattle up front came back to us on a dead run. He said to get ready, they were all coming back. Before he finished telling us what we should do about it, 1,200 pair came straight at us.

All 12 of us galloped ahead of them, and they slowed and stopped. We formed a line ahead of them, but they were ready to bolt and go back to

where we first got them. The boss warned us to just let them settle there for about 10 minutes and ordered that nobody sneeze.

After they settled enough, he asked for volunteers to head them back up the road. No takers, including me, as I was still more than a little sore at having to fix what the rider had caused. So the boss worked them for about five minutes with no success. Then he asked me to try.

The stock were facing us, but a few on the sides were facing in the direction we wanted. I pressured a few of them, which drew the attention of others to look at us. Then I used more direct pressure into the sides of some that were just standing in line to go. Within 3 or 4 minutes, 1,200 pairs were going back up the road.

These cattle didn't stay where we put them. In fact, about half returned the nine miles to where we first got them. The one rider who had to take his stress out on the cattle caused the stampede, but this herd needed better handling.

Taking stress off stock

Weaning calves and post-weaning handling

A method Bud Williams has developed for sorting and weaning reduces the stress of sorting cows from calves and also helps reduce or eliminate weaner slump and sickness.

When cows and calves are sorted well, they can be put on feed or forage promptly and will be calm and quiet—no fences wrecked or bawling all night. If calves have been stressed during the weaning process, they can be calmed right down. You can avoid the loss of weight and sickness, because they can be put on feed and water and continue gaining weight without a major interruption.

Making a grazing plan work

Although compensatory gain certainly makes up for some of the traditional weight loss during the post weaning period, I believe you still end up setting the calves back longer term, especially if they get sick.

Range calves still need to be “pre-conditioned” if you are selling weaned calves to a buyer that will feedlot them. Handling them right helps them get comfortable with new facilities, feeding from a bunk and watering trough, and being in alleys and chutes.

There are many ways to set up sorting cows from calves, but I prefer to have all the pairs in a corral or small field. It’s also possible to sort on the range using a fence line, portable corrals, or a number of handlers holding the herd.

When sorting pairs in most herds, I like to sort the cows forward and turn the calves back. The reason—the cows usually move ahead first and the calves follow behind, making it easier to allow the cow out and then slow and turn the calf back. But you can do it either way you like. Check the herd and see which is easier.

If calves can’t take as much pressure as the cows, or the cows are real nervous about going through a gate, it may be easier to sort calves out and cows back.

Prior to sorting, it’s assumed you have trained the stock to give to pressure from the sides, and they are all comfortable going by you. If they aren’t, take the time to train them to do these things well.

Practice lessons on slowing and speeding up until every time you go with movement the stock slows. And when you go by them, they speed up. Look for a real relaxed attitude while and after they slow and stop and speed up. Practice allowing the stock to come right close by you standing at the gate as they come out of another pen.

I fill a pen and let the whole herd come out and go by. Let all of them go out, then put them all back in. Do this until they come by you in a very relaxed way.

My objective with sorting and weaning is that at the end of it all, the cows will be quiet, unconcerned, and feeding immediately.

I want all the calves to accept their new location, become part of the new calf herd, and be relatively unconcerned about being separated from their mothers.

I want to be able to keep cows on one side of the fence and calves on the other without any damage, no matter how light the fence.

I want to be able to move cows off to a new pasture with little fuss.

I want good control over the calf herd so they stay together, move as a herd, and respond well to my pressure. That way I can put them right on feed and water, because I have enough control to let them go up to the feed bunks and water facilities.

An example

The first group of just 350 calves I worked this way stopped bawling completely within 50 minutes of handling and handled nicely.

When I arrived at the corral, the calves had just been weaned on the range and shipped to the corral. Dry cows had been left on the range. This fit nicely with our range plan, as drys stay up high better and off the creeks because they need so much less water.

Most of the calves were standing around bawling. None of them were on feed or water.

I worked them around the corral by asking them to respond to pressure into their sides. I also worked them to drive as a group and turn, slow, and stop once they were good at going by me.

Then I started bunches up to the feed bunks and water and pressured any that wanted to hang back. I left when they had all moved.

The calves were weaned on the range with moderate stress and were loaded onto the trailers high stress. I had to work them in 3 separate groups because of the corral setup, but actually it took only about 17 minutes per 115 calves to achieve this quiet.

Some calves are more stressed than others so need to be handled for a longer time. Few things we do are more worthwhile for stressed calves at weaning time than this. So spend the time you need to, even if it takes all day. It can be worthwhile economically.

These calves were at an average weight of about 500 pounds and would have lost about 5 percent in shrink (about 25 pounds each) between the time of initial stressful handling and settling on their own. This is a loss of about 8,750 pounds for the entire bunch.

With compensatory gain, they probably would have gained back about 80 percent of that or more within about 50 days. But the calves were shipped off within 30 days of weaning. So, I figure the rancher saved about 4,000 pounds of beef loss just by my spending a little time de-stressing them. At a price of 91 cents per pounds (at the time), this was a possible net savings of \$3,640.

A three-day Bud Williams Stockmanship School costs a lot less than that, and you learn how to take off stress in your animals, yourself, and much more. Worth the trouble to reduce weaning stress? I believe just the quiet at nighttime is worth the trouble.

The replacement concept

One of the great things about good livestock handling is that you can actually take stress off previously stressed stock. The idea is called the replacement concept.

Horse trainers use this idea to correct some types of unwanted behavior like shying. The idea is to replace something a horse is doing that you don't want (like shying) with something that you do want (like moving ahead).

The premise is that no horse or cow can think about more than one thing at a time. They are single minded, and get stuck in one thought mode or another.

Replacing unwanted behavior gives us a chance to get a horse good at something we want it to do and stop what we don't. Cattle handling can be thought of in a similar way.

Just letting the calves settle can take three to four days, which usually results in weight loss and some sickness. Trying to force calves to stop milling around the corral doesn't help much and often makes the problem worse.

The way to take stress off calves is to ask them to do something else, which will take their minds off weaning. As you give them your attention and consistency in pressure and release, you'll see a change in their mindset that corrects the problem behavior.

Cattle can't concentrate on you (good handling) **and** dwell upon their past stressful events. Proper handling results in stock focusing on you and realizing it's okay and comfortable. It is very easy to take the stress off them and takes very little time and effort.

If the stock are stressed, don't leave them this way. Work then right so they become calm.

chapter eleven

A few final words

Books, videotapes, schools, and clinics can't provide you with pat answers to solving your livestock handling problems. They can only guide you in the right direction and let you know what is possible to achieve.

Many people are satisfied with solving handling symptoms. The information in this book will help you solve **the cause** of these symptoms.

The problems you experience often aren't problems. Adopt good handling skills and you won't have 'em.

The single biggest problem people have with adopting good handling is believing the principles and traits about cattle, how important it is to them, and how important it is to accommodate them all the time when you're handling them.

Accommodating the nature of cattle 100 percent of the time isn't always easy to do. Constant watching, thinking, and adapting while handling can be a challenge—especially when it's too hot or cold and you're hungry and tired. But stock don't do annoying things to aggravate us, and they don't operate on our timetable.

Done right, good handling will achieve what both you and the stock want. But until it becomes second nature, it will seem contrary to how you “want” to get it done.

It takes time to show the stock you aren't going to be aggressive and will go with them when they are scared, but it shortens the handling time required compared to traditional methods. It gets the job done right. And done right means you don't have to do it again. It makes things that are impossible with traditional handling not only possible, but readily done. Like a trained horse, well-handled stock will really work for you.

If you handle stock well when things are going well and switch to high stress in the tough spots, don't tell your friends you tried it and it didn't work. Stockmanship, like horsemanship, has to become a way of operating around cattle all the time. You don't have to do it all perfectly and you don't have to have all the skill and knowledge of Bud Williams to drive herds well, sort well, and place cattle consistently. Do it as best you can, but do it. Dedicate yourself to the welfare of your cattle, and you'll see some amazing things happen.

A few final words

Everyone on your ranch who is handling your cattle on the range should be on board with good handling.

Ranchers may hire help with little knowledge of stockmanship or little care for the cattle and then put them with a rider that does. Some handlers do things fairly well, while others undo it. This is a great way to frustrate good riders. Good riders are in high demand, so they quit.

Handling stock low stress one day and high stress the next, is also hard on the animals. Take the time to collaborate with your ranch staff and set a sound goal for what you want to achieve. Don't do anything that doesn't keep you headed in that direction.

The practice of good livestock handling methods have the potential for you to gain remarkable control over all your animals, save time, and reduce the stress that typical handling methods impose.

Go out there with an open-mind and believe it just long enough to see the animals change. Stay with it and improve steadily. Just let go and trust that your animals will turn over remarkable control to you if you do the right things.

Keep in mind that you need to accommodate the way cattle think and react. If they aren't doing what you want, it's because they aren't able to or you're asking wrong.

Being a good rider and manager out on the range is a highly skilled profession. Don't expect to be 100 percent successful at having the stock stay where you put them every time, load into trailers or sort perfectly the first year.

Success with this method requires developing a feel for the stock, perfecting your timing, and realizing how to adjust as you read the stock. It takes a while to understand what this all means. Only the cattle can teach you how to handle them right.

The one key secret to all this is calmness: Calmness before you ask them to work, calmness during and after. There really is very little else involved in winning with cattle. Controlling cattle is easy once you get calmness in yourself and a little surety in moving right.

The changes you achieve when you are at the core of transforming yourself are the last things you'll obtain but the first things you'll need. Don't ever give up on this. There is no other practical way to achieve this degree of control over stock.

You will undoubtedly have problems and difficulties from time to time. When you're out there really stuck on a problem, sometimes the best thing to do is to go do something else for a time. After you relax yourself a bit, go back and ask the stock to do something different, maybe something easy. Then go back to what you were trying to do.

There have been times I've trailed sensitive bunches of cattle (I usually get to handle the rotten ones) and towards day's end got to thinking about dusting off and getting a decent meal. A person can get in a hurry, and horses are happy to hurry up the drive.

The stock would start to show some unease, so I would stop the herd someplace. I put the watch in the saddle bag, laid on the grass by a creek (when I could find one), and let the horse graze. When I went back to the herd with a reminder that I could be processing government forms back at the office, then it all went better from that point.

Funny how my resting at the creek solved the cows' problem about staying on the trail.

Whenever cows do things that used to annoy you, when you can say "she's just being a cow," and can genuinely think "I should have done this or that instead," then you're making progress. You will win from then on.

Call us and ask questions if you need to. Help is available at the Natural Resources Conservation Service field office and Butte Soil and Water Conservation District in Arco, Idaho.

Glossary

Agency: A division of the U.S. Department of Interior such as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Department of Agriculture such as the Forest Service, or sometimes a division of state government that makes administrative and management decisions on public lands.

Allotment: A grazing area on public lands, usually fenced along its borders, where from one to many ranchers are permitted to graze livestock exclusively.

Cowsense: The knowledge or perception of what livestock will do under certain circumstances. Modern cowsense is more often perceived as knowing all the rotten things cows will do when handled the usual way.

Desertification: A process characterized by a declining number of plant and animal species and a lack of plant productivity. Accelerated soil erosion, a poorly functioning mineral, energy and water cycle can also be measured.

Drift grazing: Encouraging a herd of cattle to walk and graze at a slow pace for the purpose of helping them understand that a rider will not be aggressive or forceful and won't do the things that bother them and that pressure has a release. Drift grazing is used to get a herd to move calmly for a rider, stay mothered-up, or slow down prior to stopping and placing a herd.

End of lesson: A period of time following release of pressure for an animal. This period of time allows an animal to associate what it just did with the release of pressure it just got which is called a training lesson. The handler allows a period of time--ranging from seconds to days--in which there is no more pressure on an animal to do a certain thing. This time interval between releasing pressure and pressuring again is what separates different training lessons, or steps, in the training of livestock.

Force: Any type of handling that causes discomfort, anxiety, stress, or panic in livestock. Force is handler movements that cause livestock to stop, move, or change directions by scaring, blocking, or roping them or by the use of noise or fast movements or by other means that cause cattle to have little good choices but to do something. Any manner of handling that livestock interpret as force is force. Anytime livestock feel they are under restraint of handlers can be interpreted as force.

Good handling: See Stockmanship

Good movement: Cattle that are moving at a comfortable pace (walk) for whatever class of animal is involved. Stock moving with good movement are inclined to follow the movement of others and are going at a pace that will encourage the movement of others. A herd going with good movement will keep itself going without requiring excessive pressure from the riders. The stock are moving straight and cows are mothered with calves. There is no bumping, curving or crowding within the herd.

Grazing Association: A recognized entity of cattle owners who graze livestock in common on public lands. Grazing associations usually have an organized structure and members with specific duties and responsibilities as well as written rules and bylaws for the way they operate.

Herding: A form of livestock management where riders strive to keep livestock together as a herd and rotate the herd through a grazing rotation based upon a set of range management principles or rules.

Holistic management: A decision-making process developed by Allan Savory that is based on four key insights that are crucial to reversing environmental deterioration. Holistic management and decision making is based on the practice of involving all the people, resources and capital being managed and collective development of one goal, comprised of three parts. Resource evaluation is based on examination of resource cycle function, understanding all the tools available for use to manage these processes, a set of guidelines for testing decisions and making management choices, as well as use of new planning procedures and monitoring methods.

Letting: The practice of moving and positioning a rider or handler so livestock will want to do what the handler is asking. Letting stock do something—such as go through a gate, into a trailer, etc.—involves a substantial understanding of livestock behavior, how they make decisions and learn, and what position and attitude from the handler will prompt stock to do what they want them to do.

Livestock: Cattle, sheep, horses, and bison that are owned by private individuals, companies, or associations.

Mothered-up: When mother cows are traveling with their calves by their sides. Pairs can also be considered satisfactorily mothered-up when they can allow their calves to be at a distance from them when traveling, and aren't concerned, anxious or stressed about it. This usually only happens when they have a high degree of comfort with handling. Cows not moving with their calves can become very anxious and stressed and will often attempt to leave the herd and return to the last place the calf suckled to look for it. Calves being driven with a herd that are suddenly turned away from the herd may bolt to where they last suckled or otherwise experienced being with their mothers. Heifers are sometimes worse about keeping track of calves than older cows.

Pairs: A cow and her calf; rarely, a cow and twin calves.

Peak Discharge: The highest value or stage of a flood or precipitation event coming from a given area.

Permittee: A person that has a permit from the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, or other federal or state management agency that allows the use of range or grazing lands by their livestock. Permits usually state the conditions of how grazing will be conducted.

Placing cattle: Settling or positioning a herd of cattle so they want to stay very near to where they are settled by the handler for a day or longer. Well-placed cattle want to stay where you take the movement out of them and have a great affinity for the spot they are placed on and the herd they are with. Well-placed cattle will leave the herd to drink and return promptly to the place where the herd is.

Planned grazing: A grazing plan that develops the pathway to creation of the landscape conditions described in the holistic goal. Planned grazing integrates many resource considerations and factors simultaneously.

Pressure: When a rider or handler positions him or herself near enough to livestock to motivate them to do something. Proper pressure motivates livestock to do what the handler wishes the stock to do without the creation of anxiety, stress or panic in the livestock. Basic types of proper pressure are also described as proper techniques.

Range: Land on which the natural and potential climax (most diverse and usually most desired) potential plant community is dominated by grasses, forbs and shrubs, and is managed in its natural condition. Range (or rangelands) is also usually characterized by seasonal precipitation patterns whereby most of the precipitation falls outside the growing season.

Rider: A person hired by a rancher or grazing association who is charged with moving cattle on the range according to a grazing plan and who takes daily care of the needs of the stock. Riders are usually seasonally hired hands or contracted labor and provide their own horses and the equipment needed to do the basic job.

Riparian area: Land situated along the banks of a creek, river, or body of water. Riparian areas have become a high priority resource for protection and enhancement and are the focus of much time and effort by range managers in many parts of the West.

Sorting: Moving one animal from a herd or removing only select animals from a main group, such as sick cows, cattle in a certain weight class, etc. Sorting out individuals from a herd, calmly, is a more advanced skill than some other handling tasks.

Stockmanship: A manner of handling and operating around livestock that produces calm and highly responsive animals and does not produce long lasting anxiety, stress, or panic. Knowledge of how animals learn, what bothers and stresses them, and how to move around animals to achieve high control is required. Handling of livestock which involves no force, limits loud noises and fast movements and creates calmer, more responsive animals. Good techniques are consistently used 100% of the time. The traits of cattle and the principles of how animals learn are the basis for all handler movements. Handlers move and position themselves in a manner and place that allows the stock to always see them. Handlers always position and re-position themselves based upon where the stock show them they need to be and how they need to operate to let them do what is desired.

Stress: A state of condition in livestock that produces strain or intense strain that can lead to panic, undesirable behavior, and disease. Handling stress occurs when it creates strain upon the animal and it can't satisfactorily adapt and failure to meet that demand has undesirable consequences (real or perceived).

Stubble height: The standing height of vegetation that is left ungrazed at the end of the growing season or grazing period, often indicated by taking the median of various measurements along a transect or streambank. Stubble height is often relied on as a surrogate measure of perennial grass or sedge health, vigor, and an indicator of the level of impacts from livestock to streambanks and other riparian resources.

Trigger height: A specified median or mean height of certain specified grasses or sedges that when reached, initiate the movement of livestock to another grazing area so that livestock and range managers can be more confident in meeting required end-of-season stubble heights. Trigger heights are usually measured along the edge of creek banks and are used as a management tool to help ranchers or permittees meet riparian area stubble heights.

Utilization: The percentage of annual production of forage consumed (removed) by animals during a grazing season or sometimes during a grazing period. Utilization is expressed as a percentage by weight of total annual forage production and should be measured at the end of a grazing season or grazing period.

Resources

It's surprising what you'll pick up from a book or tape the second or even third time you read or view it, especially if you study and then go out and work stock in between.

Buy the Williams videotape, read the literature available, and attend the Bud Williams Stockmanship School. This school is likely the best training you'll ever attend anywhere. Watch his tape, read, and practice before going to a school if you can. If you have an interest in his stockmanship schools or want to purchase videotapes, call Eunice Williams at 940-934-6521 or email Eunice@stockmanship.com. Web page: www.Stockmanship.com

Articles in *Patterns of Choice* and on the web

Range productivity, rest, and desertification

Allan Savory with Jody Butterfield, *Holistic Management: A New Framework for Decision Making* (Island Press, 1999). See also www.holisticmanagement.org

From Savory CTR's website

Nothing has generated as much controversy in the development of holistic management as the use of large herding animals as a tool in land restoration and management, though in recent years the controversy has subsided.

Early references to the positive role of animals, at least in pasture management, are contained in the writings of Andre Voisin, *Grass Productivity*, first published in 1959 (and reprinted by Island Press, Covelo, California, 1988) and *Better Grassland Sward*, 1960, both Crosby Lockwood & Son Ltd., London.

Beneficial effects of large herbivores

Bell, Richard. 1971. "A Grazing Ecosystem in the Serengeti," *American Scientist*, vol. 225, no. 1, 86-93.

Davies, William, 1938. "Vegetation of Grass Verges and Other Excessively Trodden Habitats," *Journal of Ecology*, vol. 6, 38-49.

Geist, Valerius. 1974. "On the Relationship of Social Evolution and Ecology in Ungulates," *American Zoologist*, vol. 14, 205-220.

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Gordon, Iain, and Patrick Duncan. 1988. "Pastures New for Conservation," *New Scientist*, vol. 117, no. 1604, 54-59.

McNaughton, S.J., M.B. Coughenour and L.L. Wallace. 1982. "Interactive Processes in Grassland Ecosystems," *Grasses and Grasslands: Systematics and Ecology*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 167-193.

McNaughton, S.J. 1984. "Grazing Lawns: Animals in Herds, Plant Form, and Coevolution," *The American Naturalist*, vol. 124, no. 6, 863-883.

McNaughton, S.J. 1979. "Grazing as an Optimization Process: Grass-Ungulate Relationships in the Serengeti," *The American Naturalist*, vol. 113, no. 5, 691-703.

McNaughton, S.J., F.F. Banyikwa, and M. M. McNaughton. 1997. "Promotion of the Cycling of Diet-Enhancing Nutrients by African Grazers," *Science*, vol. 278, 1798-1800.

Paige, Ken and Thomas Whitham. 1987. "Overcompensation in Response to Mammalian Herbivory: The Advantage of Being Eaten," *American Naturalist*, vol. 129, 407-416.

Bell and McNaughton, in particular, draw attention to the importance of large herding ungulates on the grasslands of East Africa (largely brittle environments). In all cases, unfortunately, the role of herd behavior and predation was missed. McNaughton theorizes that the herding ungulates, in some manner, learned that their concentration produced a more palatable form on the grass plants upon which they fed and thus the herding/moving pattern developed.

Allan Savory, on the other hand, suggests that predators produce the tendency to concentrate, and that concentrated dung and urine deposition

produces the tendency for animals feeding close to the ground to move. Where large predators have been removed, their prey remains scattered more often and more widely and become more static. Scientists are already beginning to understand the co-evolution of herding herbivores and grasslands and will undoubtedly also come to understand that predators were vital components too.

The research of Iain Gordon and Patrick Duncan indicates that the impact of large herbivores is greater than we realized, even in less brittle environments. They report the loss of species diversity in European wetlands with the removal of livestock.

Horse handling

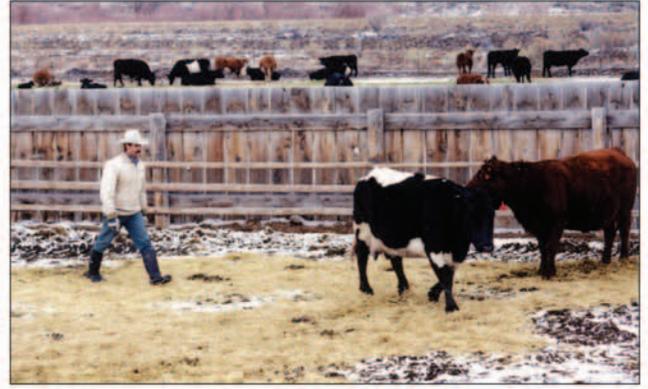
Ed Techick, *77 Years with Horses*, videotape series 2001. Stockman Films, Arco, Idaho 83213; phone 208-527-3182.



Ed Techick and "Latigo".

Francois Lemaire deRuffieu, *The Handbook of Riding Essentials* (Harper & Row, Publishers, New York, 1986)

Charles O. Williamson, *Breaking and Training the Stockhorse (and teaching basic principles of dressage)* (Caldwell, Idaho, Caxton Printers Ltd., 1992).



STOCKMANSHIP

by Steve Cote

On-the-range experiences in solving livestock handling problems.

Contains the basics of a method for creating:

- herds that stay together, drive easily and stay mothered up.**
- cattle that can be sorted readily, even on rough range without facilities.**
- cattle that will want to stay where you put them for a day or more, without fences.**
- stock that will even leave the location, water and return promptly back.**

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