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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
David Dugan
OSU Extension Educator, Agriculture and Natural Resources
Adams/Brown/Highland Counties
Ohio Valley Extension Education Research Area

The Only Way to Work Cattle Quickly is Slowly

This time of year is often a time that many beef producers try to squeeze in an opportunity to put cattle through the chute. It may be vaccinating cows prior to breeding season, worming, putting in fly tags or vaccinating the young calves. The following is from a recent e-mail that I received from Drovers Cattle Network that addresses some of the issues that we all might need a little refresher on when it comes to a less stressful experience for both the cattle and us.

Since time is of the essence, the first instinct to get cattle through the chute quicker than Ho Ho's on an assembly line at a Hostess plant is to increase your crew's energy and try to "run" the cattle through. On a second thought, that may not be the best idea.

"The only way to work cattle quickly is slowly."

"Patience is a great virtue when gathering and working cattle. When we get in a hurry, inevitably we put excessive or incorrect pressure on cattle, which usually results in an unintended reaction from the cattle," says Ron Gill and Rick Machen of Texas A&M University in a [cattle handling paper](#). You may have to google this.

According to the two experienced cattlemen, there are three simple ways to communicate with livestock. These are:

- Sight
- Sound
- Touch

Sight being the most preferred means of communication. Since human noise can potentially cause more harm than good, it might be good idea to keep Charlie out of the back cattle pen as much as possible.

"Human noise is usually stressful and marginally successful in getting the desired result. Sound should be used as a secondary method and only used when sight is not adequate," they say. "Distracting sounds shift their focus away from the desired direction."

When working any set of cattle, the cattlemen's five principles are suggested to increase efficiency while reducing stress.

- **Cattle want to see you**

"Understanding their vision is foundational to handler positioning and cattle response. Cattle have excellent peripheral vision with the exceptions of blind spots directly being (large) and in front of (small) them. When working from behind and to keep cattle from turning, it is important to stay in their sight by moving from side to side."

- **Cattle want to go around you**

“This allows you to position yourself such that, when they do go around you, they are pointed directly at the intended gate or destination. They’ll think it was their idea to go there.”

- **Cattle want to be with and will go to other cattle**

“A herding instinct is natural among ‘prey animals.’ As Stockmen we can take advantage of this natural instinct as we work from the front of the cattle. State the front – the back will follow.”

- **Cattle want to return to where they have been**

“The natural instinct of a cow is to return to the last known safe or comfortable place. The simple principles of the return box, or ‘Bud Box’ takes advantage of this instinct. Low stress handlers use this to their advantage when sorting and moving cattle from one corral to another.”

- **Cattle can only process one main thought at a time**

“If cattle are thinking about anything other than what you are asking them to do, change their focus before putting pressure on them.”

The cattlemen suggest applying pressure from the side of cattle so you don’t fall into their largest blind spot, only applying pressure when cattle have a place to go. According to them, success of cattle handling is a direct correlation to knowing when, where and how much pressure to apply. In order to be a good stockman, being able to get a good read on cattle is a must.

“The most important point to remember about the flight zone is not the zone, it is the area immediately outside the flight zone,” they say. “Stockmen must learn to anticipate, read and manage this ‘boundary’ area.”

Hopefully you were able to get some helpful hints that will improve your ability to work your cattle quickly in your operation. Sometimes you may be amazed at how fast things go if you just slow down.

Dates to Remember

May 22 Strawberry Field Night at OSU South Centers at Piketon beginning at 6:00 p.m.

May 22 Fence Building Workshop in Jackson at OARDC starting at 6:00 p.m.

June 9 Pesticide Testing at Old Y Restaurant at Noon. You must pre-register at <http://pested.osu.edu> or by calling ODA at 800-282-1955.

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