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Handle with Care

It is that time of year again when summer students are looking for part-time work and looking to gain that experience on a farm! It is not uncommon now for farms to hire milkers or labour that have no previous experience working and handling cows. But, for people who work with the animal every day it can be difficult to explain how to handle these animals in a manner that keeps both the handler, other staff, and the animal safe. Below are a few quick points to think about discussing with any new, or even older employees!

How you react to these cow behaviours, and many others, can also shape your herds personality, and the ease of which it is for you to work with them. It is a line I think we are all familiar with; stressed cows do not make milk. In fact, stressed cows can lead to a buffet of other diseases, or issues that lead to you calling Heartland out.

Main goals for any cattle handling experience can be summed up as follows:

- Low stress
- Safe
- Efficient

Cows are naturally prey animals. This drives their responses to you and your actions, but it also shapes them anatomically. Cows have their eyes placed on the side of their heads to give them roughly 340 degree vision around them. In front of them, their vision is binocular. Beside them, their vision is monocular, which essentially means they lack the ability to assess depth and shadows. And directly behind them is their blind spot. Never approach a cow from her blind spot.

Another thing to remind your staff about cows, is that they remember handlers and how they have been handled previously. An interesting piece of research showed that when a handler that previously handled the cows poorly (slapped, yelling) was milking, milk let down is reduced! Cows are not able to relax, which is needed for them to properly let their milk down! Thus, as a handler, what would be great methods to try to use to move and work with your cows?

Things to avoid:

- Yelling
- Tail twisting
- Slapping/hitting

Methods to use:

- Point of balance
- Flight zone



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Point of balance on a cow, is the point of her shoulder. How she reacts to you depends on which way you are approaching that point. Simply put, if you approach from in front of it, she will back up; approach from behind it, and she will move forward.

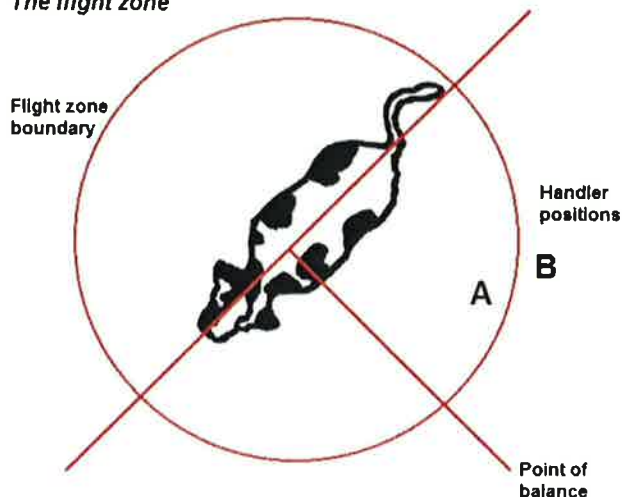
Flight zone, is a circle surrounding the cow. Depending on the situation, cow temperament, experience with the handler, the age of the cow, and the speed you approach this circle all impact the size of it. Once you are in her flight zone her goal is to move away from you. This zone is present for not only free stall cows, but tie-stall animals as well, but for tie-stall cows the flight zone is much smaller.

Overall, it is super important to remember that how we handle cattle is a huge influence on their welfare, behaviour, and performance in your herd. This was a basic intro on how to use these methods on training new employees. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask any of our vets!

Wishing for timely rains and a great 2nd and 3rd cut!

Niki Alsop, DVM

The flight zone



Fly Control

Have you heard the buzz? Large animal technicians are now offering fly prevention in combination with dehorning services. Ask your large animal tech for more information!



Upcoming stat holidays

The clinic will be closed Canada Day July 1st and the Civic Holiday Weekend July 31st to August 2nd. As always, veterinarians will be available 24-7 for emergency service. The Saturday fee schedule will remain unchanged from non-stat weekends.



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Covid-19 protocols

With the presence of Covid-19 in Ontario, our team is taking additional precautions during our farm visits, as highlighted below, to help mitigate the spread of this disease in our community. Please be aware that as this pandemic develops, we may have to adjust our procedures in response.

Veterinary farm visits

- Once on farm, we will try to maintain a distance of at least six feet from people wherever practically possible
- Care will be taken to wash and disinfect hands and contacted tools and equipment before re-entering our vehicle
- A mask will be worn whenever practically possible, especially in closed air spaces or when physical distancing is not possible. We would like our clients to do the same while we are on farm.

Technician farm visits

- Techs will continue to assist veterinarians as necessary. The same precautions as above will apply
- Technicians will continue to provide services, such as dehorning, but we ask that no farm personnel are in the immediate vicinity during their visit

Clinic procedures

- Our clinic will remain open, but business hours may be subject to change
- Clients will be met at the door by one of our customer care representatives
- Purchases will be set out at the door
- Laboratory samples will be received at the door

If you have experienced any Covid-like symptoms or have had exposure to someone with symptoms, we urge you to please notify us before your next vet visit so we can take the appropriate precautions.

We thank you for assistance in helping us continue to provide veterinary care while considering the health of yourselves and our staff.

Stay healthy!

