An_Hand_Ep100_210928

Optional Restraint Facilities for Handling Cattle

Our topics for this week are:

- Weighing scales
- Palpation cages
- Tilt tables and calf tilt tables
- Shed over the working area
- Concrete flooring
- Man-gates and man-passes
- Dip tanks

Weighing Scales
Cattle scales are inserted at floor level and enclosed as a small pen or stall positioned just before a squeeze chute or after the squeeze chute. They should be off the main alleyway and entered only when being weighed. Some scales are built into the floor of squeeze chutes, but these can cause balking of the cattle at the chute and more often go out of adjustment.

Palpation Cage
Palpation cages are used for pregnancy exams of cows, artificial insemination, fertility testing of bulls, and castration of calves. Palpation cages have handler gates in the alleyway immediately behind a catch or squeeze chute. The gate swings into the alleyway and away from the chute and can be latched to block other cattle in the alleyway from going forward until their turn in the chute. This allows a handler to inspect or treat a cow from behind by entering behind the caught cow in the chute and not be injured by other cattle in the alleyway.

Artificial insemination should be performed in restraint chutes that are not used for painful procedures such as vaccination, ear tagging, or medical treatments. AI dark boxes are preferable. The chute for AI does not need to squeeze or have a head catch.

Tilt Tables and Rotary Chutes
Tilt tables facilitate working on the flank, udder, or feet or legs of cattle. The cow is led or herded next to a vertical table top. The halter rope is tied to restrain head first. One belly strap goes under the front part of the chest and a second strap goes under the abdomen. Legs are strapped down. The vertical position of the table top is then tilted to the horizontal plane. This type of tilt table may be on a hydraulic pedestal and able to go up or down and even flush with the floor. Smaller tilt tables may be transportable for field work.

A ***rotary chute*** is a squeeze chute on a circular track which turns a cow on either side. After the cow is caught in the squeeze chute, the chute can be rotated 90 degrees until the cow is laying on its side and the side of the chute is like a horizontal table top. Rotary chutes are safer for both cattle and handlers, but they limit access to the cow's side more than a tilt table. Cattle should not be held on their sides for more than 30 minutes due to the risk of rumen gas accumulation.

Calf Tilt Table
Calf tilt tables are reduced size versions of the tilt tables used for adult cattle. They work best for calves less than 500 lb. Use of tilt tables for working calves is slower than the rope with a lariat and drag method. A tilt table also results in greater separation from herd members. However, calf tables are much safer than inexperienced handlers trying to rope calves. Calf tables also permit handling of calves with fewer people involved.

The "rope and drag" method of working calves is still practiced by some western states ranches. The reason is not because of tradition, but because some handlers believe that the 30 seconds it takes for 6 efficient calf handlers to vaccinate, ear tag, brand, castrate, and dehorn a calf is less stressful to calves and safer than being sorted, run up alleys, having their neck caught, and being squeezed in a chute. In addition, the procedures to perform on the calves take more time due to the obstructions to access created by the restraint equipment.

Shed
Sheds are helpful over working alleys and squeeze chutes, especially if equipped with lights, outlets, and water source for cleaning.

Concrete Flooring
Concrete floors under the working alleys, squeeze chute, and crowding tub can improve footing and drainage.

Man-Passes and Man-Gates
Man passes are fence gaps 12 to 18 inches wide for handler safety escapes. Man gates are 2 to 4 feet wide at convenient locations for handler movement and safety.

Dip Tank
Dipping of cattle for ticks has been replaced in most areas by acaricidal sprays, pour-ons, dusts, and ear-tags. Dip tanks should have a funneled entrance that permits only one cow to enter the dip tank at a time. Otherwise, incoming cattle may jump onto a cow that is already in the tank. The in and out ramps should be cleated for traction and not exceed 20 degrees of inclination above water. The decline in the lower aspect of the in ramp that is under water can be a steeper drop off.

Now let's recap the key points to remember from today's episode:

1. **Cattle should not be restrained on their side for more than 30 minutes on a tilt table or in a rotary chute.**
2. **Calf tilt tables require little skill to operate, but they are less efficient than a skilled team for rope and drag restraint.**

More information on animal handling is available in my book, Animal Handling and Physical Restraint, published by CRC Press. It is also available on Amazon and from many other fine book supply sources.

Additional information is available at: www.betteranimalhandling.com

Don’t forget, serious injury or death can result from handling and restraining some animals. Safe and effective handling and restraint requires experience and continual practice. Acquisition of the needed skills should be under the supervision of an experienced animal handler.