

Rope Halters for Cattle

Our topics for this week are:

- **Construction of a rope halter for cattle**
- **Proper application of a rope halter with lead rope to cattle**
- **Tying a cow's head to a chute with a rope halter**

Restraint of the head of cattle eliminates most of their struggling when they are restrained. Any other restraint that does not restrain the head well will result in continued struggling. Methods of head restraint include the use of halters, nose leads, nose rings, and stanchions.

Rope Halters

Use of a halter is the safest method to restrain a cow's head because a cow or bull may go down and be injured if it is tied only by a nose lead, nose ring, or neck rope. However, putting a halter on a cow, especially when it is in a stanchion can be hazardous for handlers. The most commonly used halter is a rope halter that extends into a lead.

Halters for ruminants are made with twisted rope and created with slicing techniques. Care must be taken not to place the nose portion of the halter lower than the bony part of the nose or the nostrils may be pinched shut causing the animal to panic.

A cattle rope halter extends into its own lead rope and exits the halter on either the right or left side of the animal's cheek, i.e., it is reversible. When leading a cow, it should be on the cow's left side. If a cow is caught in a stanchion, the lead should be on the same side of the face that the lead rope will be tied to the chute's cleats. Otherwise, the lead will wrap over the nose impairing respiration and can injure the eye. To put a cattle halter on properly, remember: "the part that draws goes under the jaws."

Rope halters are used to lead halter-broke cows, calves, and steers. They may be applied while a cow or calf is in a stall, a stanchion, or when restrained by a neck rope and snubbing post. The adjustable portion and lead rope portion should be on the left side of the cow's head. With practice the halter can be held at the crownpiece with the right hand and placed on the cow's head with a backhand movement of the right hand while standing to the left of the cow. The crownpiece goes over the right ear and then the left. The muzzle part should be open enough to fall under the cow's jaw. The halter is then tightened and adjusted into place. This method does not require a handler to be pressed against the cow to place a halter or risk injury to the handler's hip.

Some handlers prefer to use two hands and catch the muzzle first and then place the top part over of the ears. Attempting to place or adjust a halter with both hands requires pushing the handler's hip next to the cow's head. If the cow struggles in avoidance, being next to them results in being pushed away. If the handler's hip is not pressed against the cow, a swing of the cow's head may fracture the handler's hip. Furthermore, two handed haltering can result in bending close enough to a cow's head that a butting injury to the handler's head is possible.

If you have comments or you're interested in particular animal handling subjects, contact us at CBC@BetterAnimalHandling.com

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

- 1. Rope halters that extend into a lead rope are the best means of head restraint for most cattle.**
- 2. When tying a rope halter lead, the lead should always come out of the halter on the side that you want to pull the head toward.**
- 3. Application of a rope halter is best performed with one hand on the crownpiece and the other on the lead rope.**

More information on animal handling can be found in my books, *Animal Handling and Physical Restraint*, *Concise Textbook of Small Animal Handling*, and *Concise Textbook of Large Animal Handling* all published by CRC Press and available on Amazon and from many other fine book supply sources.

Additional information is provided at: www.betteranimalhandling.com . This website has more than 325 past podcasts with notes on handling of dogs, cats, other small mammals, birds, reptiles, horses, cattle, small ruminants, swine, and poultry.

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.