

# Handling Cattle - Work Smarter, Not Harder!

Cattle can sometimes be difficult to move and handle. Aggressive, stubborn, frightened or stressed cattle can all be unique challenges!

It has been proven that people who invest in learning proper cattle handling techniques can save themselves a lot of time and money (in improved meat quality and more milk). Reducing your frustration and making a difficult job easier, makes it worth it. Here are some tips for moving and handling cattle with less stress - good for cattle and you!

Photo courtesy of [www.grandin.com](http://www.grandin.com)

## 1. Using cattle behaviour to move animals: think about the animals.

- Cattle see differently than humans. Cattle have wide panoramic vision, and a blind spot directly behind.
- Cattle cannot see you if you walk up behind them.
- Cattle have a herding instinct. When cattle feel pressure from handlers, they tend to move back towards the herd where they feel safe.
- You should always try to move cattle in groups or the entire herd when possible.
- Cattle have a point of balance, which is at the animal's shoulder. If you are behind the point of balance, the cattle will move forward. If you are in front of the point of balance, the cattle will move backward.



Photo courtesy of [www.grandin.com](http://www.grandin.com)



Photo courtesy of [www.grandin.com](http://www.grandin.com)

## 2. Stay calm.

- Cattle become stressed when they are exposed to aggressive movements, shouting or loud noises.
- Don't yell! Research shows people who don't make noises move animals fastest.
- Remember, it's not a race! Learn to slow down when handling cattle.

## 3. The Right Facilities.

- Design or modify your facilities to encourage cattle to move where you want them to go.
- Use alleyways and chute systems that have solid sides. This helps prevent the cattle from getting distracted when moving.
- Cattle like light and will move towards it. Ensure that there is an even distribution of lighting throughout the handling facility.
- Shadows and bright spots should be minimized. Cattle will balk at shadows.
- Non-slip flooring will improve cattle movement and reduce injuries from falls.
- Cattle tend to travel in a circle. Chute systems that are circular encourage cattle to move forward.
- Ensure that pens and chute areas are not overcrowded.
- Chute systems should have a width of 26 inches across. If the chute is too wide, animals will try to turn around or crowd up.

## Flight Zones:

- The distance you are from an animal before it moves away is called the Flight Zone.
- Each animal has a different Flight Zone. The size of the Flight Zone is determined by the wildness or tameness of the animal.
- Cattle are moved best when you are on the edge of the Flight Zone. Cattle will move away when you enter their Flight Zone and stop when you leave the Flight Zone.

## The right handling aids for moving cattle:

- Nylon flags or small plastic bags on flexible sticks, plastic ribbons tied to the end of a stick, cattle paddles
- An electric prod should not be your primary driving tool! Prodding an animal at the back of a group will not get the animal at the front of the group to move.

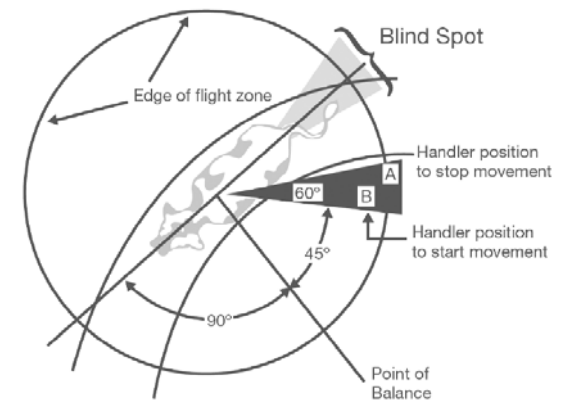


Diagram courtesy of Dr. Temple Grandin

## Did you know...?

- The more you handle your animals, the more comfortable they become with you.
- Completely tame animals have no flight zone and may have to be lead in order to move them.
- Stepping forward will make cattle go faster and stepping backwards makes cattle slow down.

## Some tips:

- Stay out of the cattle's blind spot. Work at the hip and not behind the animal.
- There is no such thing as one best position or manoeuvre for all circumstances. Use your judgement.
- If you want an animal to go somewhere, it must have room to go there.



**For more information:**  
[www.livestockwelfare.com](http://www.livestockwelfare.com)  
[www.grandin.com](http://www.grandin.com)  
[www.ofac.org](http://www.ofac.org)



For additional copies, see [www.ofac.org](http://www.ofac.org) or contact OFAC at 519-837-1326.

Printed and distributed by the Ontario Farm Animal Council. Funding for this project was also provided in part through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food Program. This is a collective outcome partnership with the Agricultural Adaptation Council in Ontario, the Manitoba Rural Adaptation Council, the Saskatchewan Council for Community Development and Alberta Agriculture and Food.