



Farm Animal Council of Saskatchewan Inc.

Cattle Handling: In the Zone

Animals have a natural boundary called the "Flight Zone". Understanding Flight Zone principles reduces stress on cattle and minimizes accidents to handlers. The size of the Flight Zone varies according to a number of factors.

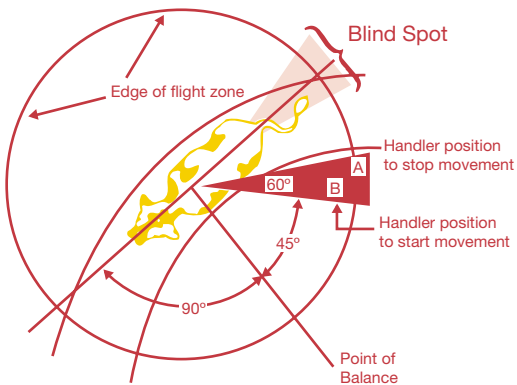


Diagram courtesy of Dr. Temple Grandin

Factors Reducing an Animal's Flight Zone Size:

- frequent contact with people
- history of gentle handling
- calm environment

Factors Enlarging an Animal's Flight Zone Size:

- infrequent contact with people
- history of rough or abusive handling
- excitement

Determining the Flight Zone:

Slowly walk up to a group of cattle. When the animals turn and face the handler, the handler is then *outside* the Flight Zone. A handler is on the *edge* of the Flight Zone when the animals turn around and walk away.

Using the Flight Zone to Move Cattle

Cattle are best moved when the handler works on the edge of the Flight Zone. Animals move away when a handler enters a Flight Zone and stops when the handler leaves the Flight Zone.

To Move an Animal Forward:

- stand in the shaded area A and B, behind the Point of Balance at the shoulder
- keep out of the Blind Spot at the rear of the animal

To Make an Animal Back Up:

- stand in front of the Point of Balance

To Make an Animal Turn Left or Right:

- approach the animal head on
- when the handler moves left the animal will turn right
- when the handler moves right the animal will turn left

Factors to Remember

- deep penetration into the Flight Zone causes panic and escape attempts
- handlers should remove themselves from the Flight Zone if an animal becomes aggressive
- cattle have a large Flight Zone when approached head on due to their wide angle vision
- extremely tame cattle may no longer have a Flight Zone and may have to be led
- generally avoid yelling; however, docile animals may only respond to a loud voice
- always approach cattle slowly, never chase; excitable animals are more prone to bruising
- if twisting the tail, release when the animal moves
- use electric prods sparingly and never on breeding animals

Factors that Improve Handling

- be gentle and quiet
- keep an even distribution of lighting (no shadows, bright spots or light glaring in the eyes)
- provide a level floor (no bumps, dips, puddles, etc.)
- no moving or flapping objects should be present
- all handling facilities (loading ramps, single file chutes and crowding pens) should have solid sides to prevent the animal from seeing distractions outside the fence
- since cattle panic at dead ends, ensure sliding one-way gates are constructed of bars or heavy mesh wire; crowding pens should be solid so animals will not turn back
- take advantage of the animal's natural tendency to turn and circle handlers by constructing curved chutes; curved loading chutes place the handler in the best position on the edge of the Flight Zone



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FACS represents the livestock industry in advancing responsible animal care and handling practices in agriculture.

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