

Rancher Predator Awareness

Guiding Behavior

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Deterrent

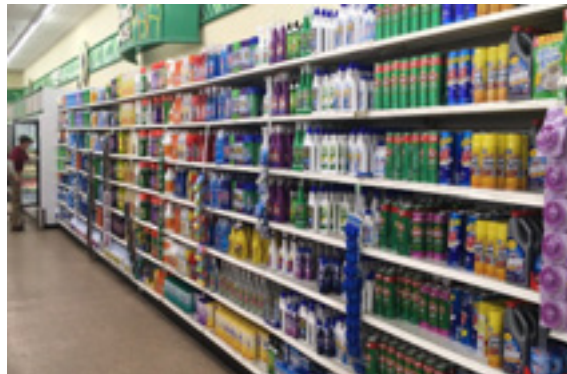
To a small extent a deterrent is simply a detour. By changing an intention or action you are simply redirecting the problem of predatory pressures to a different location. It does not change the fact that the predator is just that, a predator. The effort though is simply to protect ones own interests.

By placing a deterrent such as scent, you first deter presence. Then, by establishing a trained response in your cattle, you're making a secondary deterrent which is a substantial mitigation of predatory risk.

The purpose of training our cattle is that when predators pressure them, they group into a defensive posture of heads out and standing their ground. This is the *STANDING SOLUTION*. Rather than

individualizing and running with fear, which engages a predator's chase, this defensive posture of the herd group is an effective deterrent against predators.

- There are actually a number of physical deterrents that are placed to discourage presence. Often these are placed to frighten or scare the predator from a location. These are usually a visual stimulus, although sometimes they also apply sound. This produces a fixed deterrent and does not apply pressure to the predator; it simply repeats an action. Within short order the predator adapts by becoming indifferent to the deterrent. The deterrent then becomes simply a desensitizing tool, creating curiosity and a comfort of understanding when it repeats its actions.
- Then there are deterrents that have the same intent but produce a more effective sensory perception. That sensory perception is one of the humans least powerful but probably one of the animal kingdom's most powerful. This deterrent is scent, not visible, and if applied properly, not understandable; presenting an unknown which creates an uncomfortable situation that borders on fear and brings a powerful instinct of *self preservation* into play.



Scents such as manufactured scents are effective deterrents

Members of the animal kingdom set parameters to territory by marking. By placing our unknown scent we are drawing a line and stating, "this area is mine". When encountered, the *self preservation* instinct tells the predator to move on.

- Then there is the deterrent of action; hazing or pursuing the predator out of any given area. This action of pursuit may be an effective action, but requires a chance encounter. Most predators are very elusive and the chance of encounter is slim. The chance of pursuit is also left to actual ability to be able to pursue the predator for suitable distance in order to prevent its return.

- Confronting the predator is also a popular deterrent. We confront or challenge the predator with the aid of Livestock Guardian Dogs. It's important to realize that the LGD's job is to sacrifice itself to save its guarded stock in a battle that may pit an outnumbered LGD against predators that kill as a routine; an effective but emotional challenge to owners of the LGD.
- Range Riders keep the herd in a group stopping individualization. They also establish a human presence and scent which carries through until the next scheduled move. The problem I have encountered is that some ranges weren't designed to have large groups together. The water source was designed for watering a small group on order to intentionally spread grazing out.
- Training cattle to have a response to a predator is another action that interrupts the *chase sequence*. It is an effective way to protect the cows by their using a practiced behavior of seeking *the defensive posture of herd group*.

The Objective

By making use of deterrents we are in fact drawing a line, telling the predator "that's far enough". Choosing a deterrent that will be most effective takes an understanding of the objective and what predator we are concerned with.

Each predator has predatory skills that are unique. The *coyote*, a canine whose name in Spanish means *thief* or *cheat*, often sneaks in and steals young calves, seldom challenging a prey that has any age or size. But when they do, they will usually have superior numbers.

Another canine is *Canis lupus*, the *grey wolf*, a species of predator whose skills are very adaptable, either hunting as individuals or in packs. The wolf's home range is quite large. I often hear some say that the prey base is not substantial enough in California to support the wolf. I don't believe this to be true. As stated above, the wolf is very adaptable. California has 2.38 million head of cattle, ½ million sheep, many more feral and domestic animals. The wolf's elusive nature and California's climate and terrain will provide a plentiful habitat. The large supplies of domestic animals will guarantee the wolf won't go hungry.

Another predator that has a very large home range is the mountain lion. The lion is a loner in regards to hunting, but their large home ranges aid in deterring presence. When you present a

situation of concern, you are in effect asking them to leave and go somewhere more comfortable. With its large home range, that's a simple and very obtainable request.

Black Bears are also an effective predator. Bears seem to become habituated more quickly than other predators. When using scenting as a deterrent for bears, placing it on small limbs unable to support a bear's weight seems to help. Keep it high and light.

By understanding the predator's actions and travel routes, we can present a deterrent that is effective. Some large ranges may require multiple plans for different terrains.

Game trails and cow trails are often shared due to the trails purpose. The purpose of the trail is usually the destination, water, salt or mineral grounds, or an easier travel in tough terrain. The trail may be to feed, but the feed requirement is different for each species. Roads are often part of trail, or intersecting it, or just running parallel.

Presenting an unknown

By presenting an unknown we are effectively placing a barrier that engages primary instincts. Those instincts such as *self-preservation* are rooted in all animals. It is a fundamental instinct of survival, which is a low-level fear. When presented properly, the deterrent becomes an obstacle to behavior.

Trails and travel routes in and out of the range are your first sites for applying deterrents. They are also the sites to begin *monitoring*. (See *Monitoring*)



Routine monitoring with tags (aluminum cans)

Presenting an effective deterrent requires the inability of the predators to contact the deterrent or figure out a repeated action. With scenting, it's important to place the scent out of reach of the predator placing it high in the breeze. Although all deterrents are an unknown in the beginning, if a deterrent is constantly repeated, the predator will soon adapt. Changing scent markers with each application every 7 to 10 days will present a new and changing deterrent.

Behaviors

A predatory behavior is just that, it's what a predator does. But along with those behaviors, they are accompanied by instincts that affect behavior. These instincts can manage and dictate a animals actions or inactions.

The *self-preservation instinct* influences behavior. This is what our deterrents should present, some level of engaging the *self-preservation instinct*. By producing this uneasiness we effectively move the predator to another location.

We can also induce that *self-preservation instinct* in our stock's behavior. Our livestock are herd animals because of predators. Through the years of reduced predatory pressures, and the management objectives of spreading grazing out to better utilize the ranges, our stock have been weakened; losing the instinct that the *herd group* is their *safe zone*.

By using *pseudo predators* we can reinstate the *Standing Solution* and the *defensive posture of the herd group*. By applying the training practice of *pressure and release* the cattle soon seek the herd for comfort and protection, disrupting the individualizing of the *chase sequence*. This presents to the predator the perceived challenge of a foe rather than a victim, and another situation that engages the *self-preservation instinct*.

Presenting multiple layers of deterrents is key to disrupting actions and behaviors.

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