

Understanding the Principle

Mark L Coats

Predators are a risk to any Ranching operation. The risk is not only depredations, but the unsettled environment and the fear that the cattle are confronted with.

Losses can range from an actual depredation, to cattle being restricted from grazing. Daily routines, such as watering or seeking the best feed, all can be compromised. The harassment from a predator may effect gains, breeding and fertility. Not to mention the disposition and work-ability of a set of cows.

Understanding the risks and the nature of predators is key to preventing losses of any kind.

Any predator requires specific behavioral actions to be successful in securing its prey. Each predator species has their own specific characteristics of hunting.

Just as domestic animals differ, such as a dog or cat, so do wildlife. One thing that they all have in common is that they all require an individual as prey.

Felines usually use the surprise tactic in securing prey. Whereas canines are more apt to just chase their prey. Much like dogs chasing a car. The two predators differ in hunting styles, but still have the common factor of requiring an individual to be prey.

By working to stop the individualization of our stock, we present the stock with a comfortable surrounding, the herd group. The herd is a natural defensive posture. Through the years of management practices and minimal to no predator pressures, our stock have been trained to individualize themselves.

By promoting the defensive posture of the herd group, we rekindle a basic instinctual herd response to predators.

Once we promote and practice the Defensive Posture of the Herd Group, the stock soon seek it for comfort. They actively graze within close proximity to other stock, which I call Herd Awareness, an awareness of being close to others in case they have pressure from any outside threats.

Many deterrents focus specifically on the predators. With such things as physical barriers, hazing or pursuing or other physical items made to scare the predators away.

Although those deterrents all engage the predators, that in itself is their drawback. By repeatedly engaging, you are simply desensitizing the predator. It's not much different than starting a young colt, the more you work with the colt, the calmer it becomes. The colt soon overcomes fear and becomes comfortable within the routine. As with the predator, it becomes comfortable with the apparatus or the distance you are willing to pursue it.

Predators are animals and they are governed by instincts and fear, no different from the stock we seek to protect.

If we understand that the predators are animals and they react to instinct and fear, then we can understand why the Standing Solution and the Defensive Posture of the Herd Group is an effective deterrent.

Another concept, is animal communication. The animal kingdom communicates, although not in conversations as we think of communicating. Theirs are linked to physical posture and scents.

Anyone who has been around a dog, understands how that a dog marks its territory. You're also aware that the same dog is always smelling and seeking an others markings. Scent is a powerful communication tool.

The awareness that scent plays a powerful role in marking territories, such as pack domains, offers another solution to deterring presence.

If we place a strange and unfamiliar scent, that scent will create a concern and an uneasiness. Engaging the instinctive response of fear, which has the reaction of fight or flight, which is linked to the basic instinct of self-preservation.

By placing a scent marker high in the breeze, we establish an unknown. Unable to determine where or what that scent is, it leaves only one option, flight. The predator simply moves on to a less concerning area.

Many speak of co-existence. I personally don't agree. The predators do what they do. It's not much different than a bird flying, it's what they do. Predators are that, predators. The stock are what they are, prey, or an attractant at the least.

The option that I prefer is firstly, keep the two apart. Keeping the predators away from the stock. I present a scent and keep it ever changing to deter presence.

Secondly, I work to instill a reaction of seeking the Defensive Posture of the Herd Group.

The wolf OR-7 came on my ranch in 2011. My concern was that I was already suffering losses from other predators. I was already losing 5 head per year and I could not sustain anymore losses.

Since those beginning efforts, I have lost one calf to a predator. That puts my efforts in the black +44 head.

This is not co-existence, it's MITIGATING RISK.

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