

DEVELOPING A HERD POSTURE *And removing movement*

Movement is intentional whether it is grazing calmly or flight. Each action of movement has a reason for its occurrence. Stimulates are the reason of movement, hunger, weather or pressure from encroachment into the flight zone or *perceived pressure*, they are all factors that create movement. We must have an understanding of what creates movement in order to manage it. The reaction of fear has the self-preservation reaction of fight or flight. Removing fear is our objective and promoting the instinctive reaction of the defensive posture of the herd group. This is accomplished by desensitizing and replacing fear with the *Standing Solution*.

Creating the herd reaction of *Predator Awareness* first begins with developing a stance where the training can begin. This method of desensitizing is the same action as the NCHA uses in settling cattle prior to each cutting class. Or if you are a rancher who works your cattle horseback and your cattle aren't exposed to people on the ground that new exposure will create fear, this same method can help you prepare and expose them. Areas that can be an issue are cattle leaving the ranch destined for sale yards, feedlots or anyplace that they may handle cattle afoot. The fear will seem as if you have wild cattle and wild cattle no matter the quality are less desirable. You can use this simple method to calm and expose your cattle to humans working a foot.

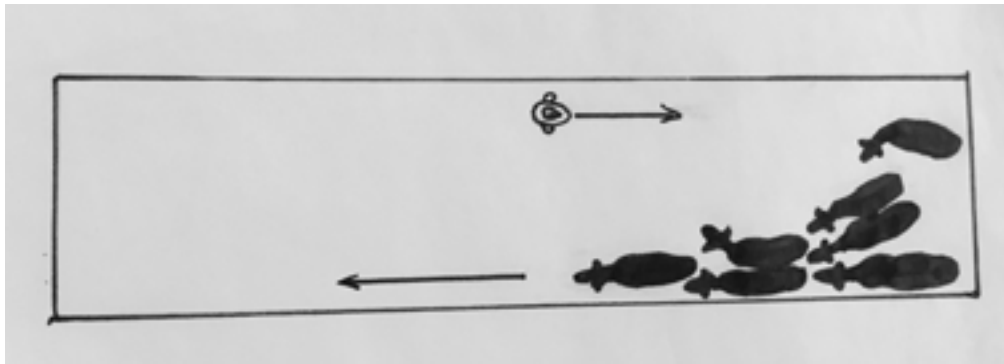
Developing a herd or settling cattle, gentling or leaving them over night or accustoming cattle to dog presence is all the same effort of removing the reaction of *nervous movement* from *perceived pressure*. It is about using steady movement outside of the livestock's flight zone (desensitizing). Developing the herd is the first step so that we may begin the training of *predator awareness*.

One of the most common mistakes that defeats the effort of developing the herd stance is the direct approach. Going straight to the livestock or running to get ahead of them. These efforts create flight. Flight is what we are trying to replace with the defensive posture and the *standing solution of predator awareness*.

The training practice of desensitizing is a long held practice of training behavior. But as with anything, done poorly, it can result in no results. Let's look at the practice of sacking out a young horse. The objective is to get the horse used to things moving around and contacting him. But done incorrectly it is just a practice of mild abuse. Without the understanding of the desired result there are no forward accomplishments. In training one of the most common mistakes is overdoing a training session. We as humans enjoy results, so we continue the action to enjoy the results. The animal only understands that the repeated effort must require a different response. It does not instill a learned behavior but it relates a bad experience. With the horse being sacked out for the first time, realize that when the horse accepts the blanket, stop. Give a moment for the horse to understand "this is it" before continuing. When we are working with animals which may be in the beginning of training "*kindergarten*" and we often ask for a "*PHD*" result. Understand that training is an progressive effort over time.

Another training practice is the practice of "*Pressure and Release*". The pressure is applied to achieve a reaction, when the correct response happens, the pressure is released. The release is the reward. Instilling that the correct response is set to memory. The release must come quickly, with a time for the animal to realize "this is it" before continuing.

Whether you are calming cattle destined for a sale or creating the stance outside, it is the same method. If it's settling or calming cattle destined for the sale, you can start in a larger pen of your corrals. Get off your horse and at the far side of the corral, walk back and forth crossing the corrals at a normal pace in a lateral pattern that applies no pressure to the stock. If movement is created *stop and stand*. When the movement stops walk away and begin the lateral pattern again. After several passes move the cattle to an alley. The alley should be closed at both ends. Stand at the end of alley and slowly proceed along one side. When you create the reverse parallel pressure they will pass by you following the lead animal, often at a high rate of speed. *Stop and Stand*, when they have passed and are standing at the end of the alley with *no movement*, proceed to the other end of the alley you were first destined for. Turn and slowly approach the cattle again keeping to the side of the alley, recreating the *reverse parallel pressure*. As the cattle are passing by *stop and stand*, if movement stops when you stop, continue and proceed to the end of the alley. This will need to be repeated several times, but it will effectively expose cattle to work calmly a foot.



Alley work-reverse parallel pressure

When we are accomplishing the goal of herd development outside on the range we don't have the luxury of a back drop such as a corral or an arena or any type of containment. Because the training is happening in large areas it may cover a considerable distance, but we are performing this training a horseback not on foot. The training in open areas takes an understanding of the cattle's response and recognizing the edge of the flight zone. The cattle



Lateral movement-no pressure

Will relay to you where that distance is. Depending on the cattle's disposition and sensitivity that will tell you the appropriate distance. The cattle's first reaction is a recognition of your presence which is usually an *eye to eye* contact, *stop and stand*. Depending on the cattle's sensitivity is the determining factor in proceeding or backing up. If the cattle move with eye contact then they are sensitive, back up. If they remain standing or return to grazing, proceed from side to side passing laterally to the outside edges of the furthest edge animals before turning. This movement is only movement intended for you the trainer. It should be started at a walk and after the stance is sound with *no movement*, your efforts can be escalated to a trot, but never a run. If this movement creates movement you must stop and increase the distance of your separation between you and the cattle and begin again. The sensitive cattle will need to be approached again (stop, back up and stand) until the response is just curiosity and a stance. Then proceed with lateral movement, if movement is created, back off again and repeat.

Once the lateral movement creates no movement you may proceed by closing the distance at an diagonal approach. (This is *the gather*, bringing the cattle together) Your pace, as you get closer to the animals being grouped should slow and occasionally stop and start randomly. When the cattle are grouped and standing loosely the effort has been accomplished. This is a very good time to quit. The appropriate number of *herd development trainings* (where cattle stand calmly) prior to beginning *predator awareness* training is three.



By developing a herd group, movement becomes an easy effort of moving a herd group versus keeping individuals grouped together.

If your cows are not accustomed to dogs, this same *herd development* may be used to accustom the cows to them. The control of your dog is of great importance. No yelling or loud calling should be required. When a dog is not in the working mode it's proper position should be behind the horse ready and willing to respond to a command.

The introduction that you are arranging between the cows and the dog needs to be performed without disturbance. No other projects should be on the agenda, and no other guests present. We humans can multi-task and are comfortable with chatting while we work, but it is distracting to the animals whether it is the cows or the dogs. Both their attention should be focused on the introduction.

Once the herd posture is complete, cows are grouped, calm and standing. This is the construction phase of *predator awareness*. You are building a foundation that further training can be built upon. In the beginning moving forward to quickly will create cracks in that foundation.

Allowing several trainings of just establishing a herd posture, will benefit the results of the *predator awareness* training in the future.

We have established the *herd group* and our next step will be creating movement. With the group standing quietly it requires a pressure to start the stock. By rocking your horse, short turns from left to right (it is preferred that the horses front feet are the only movement) this will usually start movement. If not, walking in a zig zag pattern works well also. This is rear pressure point pressure, this action with further training will be discouraged. Pressure point pressure is a controlled response but it's actions are rear pressure and movement. Closing mimicking a chase sequence. With further training, creating movement will begin at the lead and create movement with the *reverse parallel pressure*.

After creating movement and following for a short distance at least 200 yards. We will create a stop. By using forward parallel pressure out side of the flight zone (the *passing zone*) you will create a stop. This is most effective when done at an extended trot (*do not run*). If you are accompanied by a dog send him at this time and allow him to proceed to the lead. After the cattle have stopped, remove all pressure. Allow the cattle to stand. You have just effectively created the *herd posture*, began movement and you have successfully accomplished the first training session of *predator awareness* and *the basic stop*.

You are on your way to instilling the defensive posture of your herd.



Mark L. Coats