

Predator Awareness

Your Cattle's Preparedness / Evaluation

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In understanding that the reason for the *predator awareness* Stockmanship method it is to deter predators pressure by grouping into a defensive posture. This skill if promoted and maintained can be an effective deterrent against *wolves, coyotes, bears* and *lions*. By grouping into a herd group the herd group itself becomes the defensive posture.

Our goal is to eliminate individualization and flight and promote the herd as a safety zone. In order to begin we must evaluate our cattle and our own Stockmanship skills. By understanding that the method is based on a relationship between the rancher and their livestock. Each rancher has his or her preferred method of handling their cattle. And this Stockmanship method only is intended to deter predators.

All predators require prey, in order for the predator to be successful at their hunt they must attack individuals. Groups and herds pose too much risk to a predator. If an individual can be singled out from the herd and pursued as an individual that fits a predator's method of hunting very well. When a predator individualizes a prospect the next step is *the chase*.

By understanding that we are attempting to eliminate the *individualization* and the *chase* we can evaluate our presence among our cattle. Do you promote the chase? Do you act as a predator or do you promote calmness and a defensive posture of the herd group? Some questions may shed some insight to your cattle preparedness.

- 1) Do you chase your cattle?
- 2) Do your cattle flee or run off when they see you?
- 3) Do they become nervous?
- 4) Do they chase dogs, people, or act aggressively towards anything?
- 5) When you process or engage in any management practice is it a quiet event or a stressful one. And after it's completion are the cattle calm?

If you have questions about some of the above, you may be playing into our opponent's game plan. All of the above promote flight and the predator's *chase sequence* and help establish individualization.

If you are confident that you are promoting sound Stockmanship but wish to promote *predator awareness*. The skills can help you refine and promote a calm and well-mannered herd.

The effort must fit your specific operation. Whether it is a cow calf, stocker or feeder operation. The goal is replacing the fear response of flight or fight and reinstating the cattle's response of herding.

TRAINING/ ESTABLISHING THE HERD

When driving cattle start by moving from edge to edge, back and forth in a lateral movement. Don't move directly towards the group. What you are establishing is a subtle response. You are establishing a herd grouping. If you are familiar to the (NCHA) the *NATIONAL CUTTING HORSE ASSOCIATION* and watch some of the cuttings and what happens prior to the competition. What they do is to settle the cattle to prepare them for the competition. This action promotes a herd group. It is very similar to *establishing a herd* which is what we are accomplishing. Our efforts are slightly different in that we are performing it in open country without a backdrop or a fence for confinement.

The action of *lateral pressure* begins outside the pressure point and slowly moves towards the flight zone. Upon reaching the flight zone movement is created. Each time you use this method the flight zone becomes closer and achieves a slower response. Establishing that the herd is a good and calm place. At a point the distance between you and the cattle will be close enough to create movement.

When we achieve movement the next response is following. Not driving or pushing. But fallowing and slowly backing off of the rear position. This will create a pace that is comfortable for the cattle. Once we have achieved a slow steady pace for a short distance we have accomplished a controlled movement.

THE STOP

The next step is to stop the cattle's movement. If you have the distance you can watch for the stop. Proceed towards the group after they have stopped. Proceed in an indirect path of no pressure. Make your presence known, well outside their pressure point. Once they are aware of your presence, if they do not move and remain standing your training session is complete. Turn and leave.

If movement occurs again, proceed to a position of following the herd. Repeat the following of the herd until the group is at a comfortable pace. If you have a heading dog send him forward at this time. If you don't have a dog, choose a path latterly away from the cattle, this works well at a trot, do not run. Turn in the direction the cattle are proceeding out side of there pressure zone. This is preformed in the *passing zone*. Once you are ahead of the cattle turn towards them. This should create a stop. Stand for a short time. Approximately 2/3 minutes. Then ride away. The days Training is complete. In the coming days repeat this technique. The total days to create a well mannered response will vary. On a set of mature mother cows of average disposition it should take 3-4 days, yearlings 4-5.

TRAINING/CREATING MOVEMENT

After establishing the herd and the ability to stop your cattle where you choose. The effort of movement must be established. Creating movement is better achieved without hooping or hollering or just driving with rear pressure. Rear pressure when used by itself promotes the chase and is a training method of creating flight. Rear pressure must be used

in combination with *reverse parallel pressure*. This changes straight on rear pressure. And in most cases begins at the front of the herd group. Then moves towards the rear creating movement in the opposite direction you are riding. And reaching the rear pressure place, you are just turning and following. This maintains the herd posture and grouping of the cattle and promotes the calmness of the herd. *Reverse parallel pressure* needs to become a common effort of movement in all locations, corrals, allies, gates, pastures. The *reverse parallel* helps the cattle remain settled and establishes a direction of movement. It also instills a calm movement, because the speed control is your distance to the cattle. Closer creates a faster pace. Crowding even creates flight in the opposite direction you are proceeding. Your speed also acts as a regulator to the cattle's speed. By pausing your pace or increasing your distance between you and the stock you remove motion or stop the cattle's movement all together. If the cattle are moving away and you wish to stop them, that can be accomplished by *forward parallel pressure*. If passing them is required to get to the lead, avoid running, trotting outside the pressure zone is preferred.

When you begin working with these techniques, make the effort to create its own time slot specifically for practicing these skills. When you leave the behind position to open a gate for the first time it is an uneasy feeling that you are just going to drive the cattle backwards. If you have established the herd and move on the outside edge of the flight zone and proceed calmly, the herd will remain in tack. Then by returning to the rear of the herd group, it will engage the *reverse parallel pressure* and you will create movement threw the gate you just opened. Then you are just turning and following. Confidence will soon allow these techniques to be used routinely.

All of these skills can be applied before a dog is selected or started for *Predator Awareness* training.

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