



# Grazing Gazette

Volume 7, Issue 1

January/February, 2018

This newsletter is a joint effort from the following organizations:



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**HELP US CUT COSTS!**

Let us email you.  
Send message to:

[ruesi001@umn.edu](mailto:ruesi001@umn.edu)

## Cow Calf Days 2018

### Topics:

*“Calf Value Marketing”*

Dar Giess

*“Bull Selection”*

Lee Leachman, Leachman Cattle of CO

*“Q&A panel on bull selection”*

Lee Leachman, Tony Rossman, Brian McCulloh & Dar Giess

*“Backgrounding your calf crop”*

Afredo DiCostanzo, U of M Beef Team

### Dates/Locations:

2/8/18 5:30 pm

Tony or Michelle Rossman Farm  
Oronoco MN

2/9/18 12:00 pm

Four Seasons Community Center  
Caledonia MN



**Registration:** \$10/person, includes meals and educational materials.

**Information.:** Tony @ 507.259.2174 or Michelle @ 507.292.1191  
extension.umn.edu/beef, 218.398.1916, emmousel@umn.edu

**Hosted by:** The University of Minnesota Extension Beef Team

## Cow Calf Days

### 2018 Seminar Tour & Trade Show

#### Southern Tours:

February 5 5:30pm

Mora; Kanabec Co. Jail

February 6 9:30am

Starbuck; Jim Wulf's Sale Facility

February 7 9:30am

Pipestone; MN West CC

February 8 5:30pm

Oronoco; Tony Rossman Farm

February 9 12:00pm

Caledonia; 4 Seasons Community Center

#### Northern Tours:

January 23 9:30am

Staples; Central Lakes Center

January 23 5:30pm

Bagley; American Legion

January 24 5:30pm

Lancaster; Community Center

January 25 5:30pm

Roseau; Gene's Bar & Grill

January 26 5:30pm

Iron; Cherry Community Center

# Principles of Handling Cattle

Eric Mousel, U of M Extension Beef Team

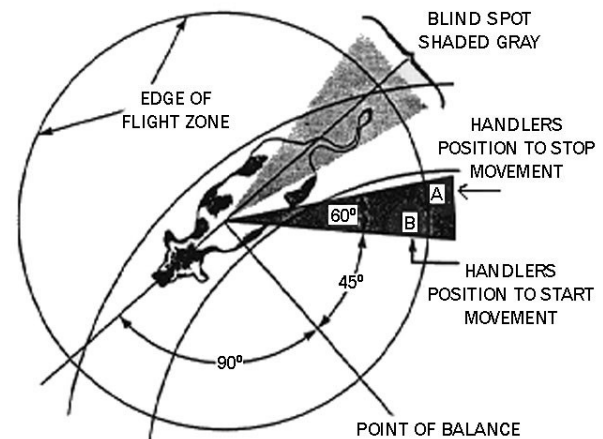
The design for a handling facility depends a lot on the skills of the people using it. A lot of emphasis has been placed on proper animal handling skills recently; especially in the last decade. I suppose some of the pressure comes from the Anti-Animal Ag movement, some of it comes from the Not-In-My-Backyard anti-agriculture movement, and some of it may come from the All Technology is an Agent of Death movement; also known as the We Oppose Everything movement. In any event, it certainly is a good thing that topics like animal handling have come to the forefront of animal agriculture through industry quality assurance programs and other producer education programs. In the next several articles I would like to visit with you about some thoughts on animal handling principles and philosophies. Some of it you have probably seen before, some you may not have heard of; but in the end we will try to tie together the discussions on cattle handling skills and handling facilities.

## Flight Zone

The first principle of doing anything around animals is understanding the concept of flight zone. An animal's flight zone is an imaginary circle around the animal that determines how close a perceived threat is allowed to get before the animal moves away from the threat. The presence of the threat is referred to as pressure. The closer the threat comes to the edge of the flight zone, the more pressure is placed on the animal to decide how to react. If the threat crosses the edge of the flight zone, the pressure becomes more than the animal can bear and it will move away from the threat to put the threat back outside of the flight zone, thus relieving the pressure on the target animal. When handling animals, this concept of flight zone and pressure is very useful in getting an animal to respond to you as a handler.

## Balance

The next concept to understand is balance. Every animal perceives other objects within its view as in front, to the side, or behind. The difference is largely determined by whether the target animal is a predator or prey animal. Humans are predators, therefore our eyes are placed in the front of our heads so that we can focus very clearly on our predation target. Thus, we have a very narrow range of vision without physically turning our head to see something that is not directly in front of us. Conversely, prey animals; like cows, have their eyes placed in the side of their heads making a very wide range of vision around their bodies so that they can see predators without physically turning their heads to see. In fact, the only place a cow cannot see without turning her head is directly behind her. With that in mind, now envision in your mind the wide angle vision of a cow and how she would determine if a threat is in front of her, to the side of her, or behind her. By thinking about this, you probably figured out that you could draw an imaginary line perpendicular to her, just behind her shoulders and that is the line that separates front and side. If she can't see the threat at all, she assumes it is behind her. This perpendicular line is her point of balance.



## Position

The third concept to understand is position. Position is simply where the perceived threat is in relation to the animal. As a perceived threat approaches the cow, she is determining the distance of the threat in relation to her flight zone (pressure), the speed at which the threat is increasing the pressure on her flight zone, and whether the threat is in front, coming from the side in front (shoulder) or side behind (flank). If the threat disappears, she knows it is directly behind her. The significance of all of this is that position of the threat is going to determine the response of the animal to the threat.

This probably goes without saying, but the response of an animal to pressure on its flight zone is generally opposite the position of the handler. So if a handler moves up on a cow and breeches the flight zone at the left shoulder, the cow will likely turn and move towards her left flank because she perceives the threat in the front side, thus to relieve the pressure, she needs to move to the rear flank in the opposite direction of the approach of the handler. Conversely, if a handler pressures the flight zone from the left flank, she is likely to either simply step forward, away from the handler, or turn and step away. The devil is in the details because as you probably figured out during the point of balance discussion, the area in front of her point of balance is much smaller than the area behind her point of balance, therefore, when approaching from the flank, the angle of approach makes a big difference in terms of her response to the pressure.

By keeping these three principles in mind, it is probably clear that we can manage an animal's response to our presence by controlling our pressure on her flight zone, our spatial relationship to her point of balance, and our position in relationship to both. These principles, when used properly negate the need for yelling, cussing, wild waving of arms, haze flags, throwing of expensive hats, sorting sticks, marital problems, outright divorce, and child abuse.

In the next article I will talk about some ways to think about how you can bring all of these principles together that best fit your style and personality to make handling cattle less stressful for you and the animals. If you would like to visit more about handling cattle or if you have some stories concerning less than optimum cattle handling experiences to tell about; for research purposes of course; give me a call at 218.398.1916 or email [emmousel@umn.edu](mailto:emmousel@umn.edu). Thanks and have a great day!

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## Attention Readers:

This is the last year the SE MN Grazing Gazette newsletter will be delivered to your mailbox. In an effort to be more efficient with both our hours and our dollars, the Gazette will only be available by email beginning in 2019.

This will allow us to give you more articles and a lower cost!

If you wish to continue receiving the Gazette, please send an email to [ruesi001@umn.edu](mailto:ruesi001@umn.edu) with "Gazette mailing" in the subject line.





**33<sup>rd</sup> Annual**

## **Private Treaty Bull Sale**

~ selling 60 Balancer & Gelbvieh Bulls ~

Saturday, February 24<sup>th</sup>

11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

At the farm, Goodhue, MN

25765 Cty. 3 Blvd.      [www.schaferfarm.com](http://www.schaferfarm.com)

Goodhue MN 55027      [brian@schaferfarm.com](mailto:brian@schaferfarm.com)



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