

## The Roar of Silence Present When Technology Takes a Hit

By Kris Ringwall  
Extension Beef Specialist  
NDSU Extension Service



The discussion has slightly tempered on the national ID program. Several projects attempting to implement the program have many producers realizing the state of affairs is changing, especially when one recalls living, functioning and thinking beings are involved.

Control is so often at the center of any issue. In the boardroom, control issues can be subtle, but still present, often leading to a workable organizational structure. This organization actually results in ideas moving from just a thought to some type of output and implemented through a program with a process.

In contrast to the orderly business approach, the business of livestock handling sometimes lacks the controlled boardroom environment. This lack of control in handling livestock is often overlooked, or even denied, when technology is brought to the field.

Accounting for cattle, horses and other animals associated directly or indirectly with food production brings to light the challenge of control. Most producers, however, generally err on the side of *it won't happen to me.*

It is important to remember when working with livestock that they are living, mentally competent beings. This point was driven home the other morning while doing a routine fecal sample for parasite evaluation and an ultrasound for reproductive function. The work required that the animal, in this case a mare, be restrained.

The day was going fine, mare after mare walked through the facilities, no need for alarm. The mares were haltered and stood patiently while the fecal and ultrasound exams were conducted. The environment was secure with relatively significant chutes and handling equipment in use. There was a secure feeling that the equipment was quite capable of handling unexpected movement to provide assurance to the mare that no harm would come.

And then the last mare entered the chute. She was somewhat nervous, but no more so than several other mares. The initial fecal evaluation went well, the last ultrasound exam on schedule. Then time stood still.

With one quick jump, both front feet left the floor and the mare bolted backwards. The handler, outweighed by some 1,000 pounds, responded with a traditional tug on the

halter, hoping to calm the mare.

The mare placed all her weight on her hind feet into what is called rearing. This is not uncontrollable but the mare's rear end hit the back of the chute, forcing her rear legs forward. The result, to everyone's disgust, found the mare lying on her back with her legs up, a pose she held for only a short time.

During this process of flipping and rotating, one very powerful swoop of the right hind foot, now on the left side of the chute, caught the corner of the equipment table successfully sending several thousand dollars worth of equipment crashing to the ground.

*Does this happen very often?* someone asked. *No,* was the quick response. The praise for solid chutes was echoing strongly within the walls of the facility, as the chute boss commenced the process of emergency evacuation of the chute. No flight assistants had issued pre-work evacuation procedures and the experienced crew successfully released the mare.

Somewhat shaken, the mare left. The crew, also shaken, took a deep breath and started damage control. The table was uprighted and the equipment reloaded. The silence was absolute as the call for power went out with all eyes on the unbroken monitor.

*Come on, come on,* was the persistent thought. Finally, a blink and all systems functioned. It was now lunch time.

There are more cows to do tomorrow, horses again the day after and thousands of calves on the schedule. Technology works and technology can be sent to the field, but don't ever forget, control is not guaranteed.

May you find all your USAIP ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at [www.BeefTalk.com](http://www.BeefTalk.com). For more information, contact the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to [www.CHAPS2000.com](http://www.CHAPS2000.com) on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0209.

---

