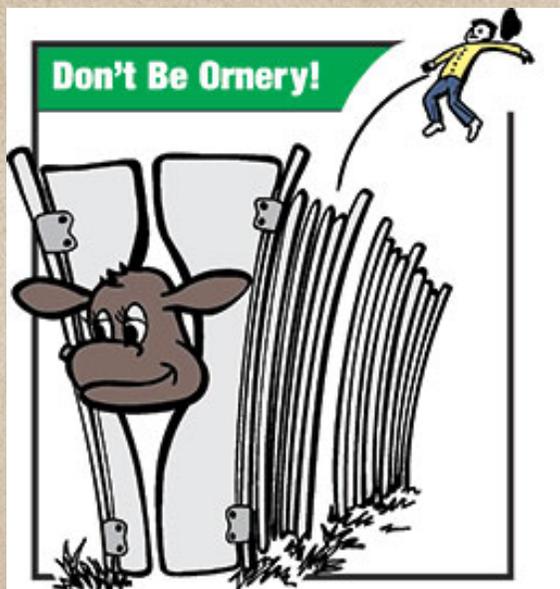




BeefTalk 641: No Need for Wild Cattle

SUPPORTING MATERIALS



During encounters among humans and cattle, the odds of a human winning against wild or ornery cattle that dislike humans are slim to none.

Using ultrasound, we pregnancy checked the heifers last week at the Dickinson Research Extension Center ranch. The real excitement was the lack of excitement. The heifers walked into the evaluation box, stood quietly and walked out when the test was done. Kudos to management because cattle do not need to be wild and ornery.

Cattle are cattle, and one needs to remember the living beast in front and behind you in a cattle chute is five to 10 times your weight. Generally, a bolt is all that separates you from being sandwiched in between.

While standing in a chute and working, one must remember that good organization, equipment and procedures minimize the risk. However, the risk of injury always exists. During encounters among humans and cattle, the odds of a human winning against wild or ornery cattle that dislike humans are slim to none.

There is no joy in working wild cattle. Historically, heifers are more nerve-racking because they are nervous and fidgety during their first trip through the chute. Those heifers that dislike humans have not yet been culled.

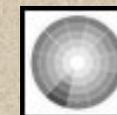
Those wild heifers exist in small numbers, but it only takes one to make a good day tragic. The acceptance of ill-mannered cattle always should be avoided.

When cattle ran on the wild range, those cattle with great instincts and defensive behaviors were in demand. Today, those cattle are better off in a feedlot.

A cow intent on settling a score with a producer at any time may make a good story, but writing or reading an obituary is no fun. Wild, defensive cattle are not welcome.



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Memories are always nice, particularly when one is alive to remember them.

In all the cattle that I have worked through the years, many days stand out as great ones. Cattle behavior is a reflection of how they have been handled. Arriving on location and being greeted by a pen of excited, nervous-eyed, heads-up heifers, I knew the day was not going to be good.

For those who have palpated cows, the feel becomes routine, warm, uneventful and notably relaxed. That day, the feel was not there.

Instead, the reproductive tracts were tight, rigid and tense. Arterial blood pressure caused arteries to contract profusely against my sleeved arm. I did what I was supposed to do and survived. I don't think I will do that again.

I also remember the time a cow decided to leave the chute regardless of the consequences. Generally, cows calm down when the squeeze arm is applied. This cow wouldn't under any circumstances. Dutiful operators were not going to let her out until she was vaccinated and weighed. She won, we lost.

There are many scenarios that play out in the chute, which is designed for the safety of the animals and the people caring for them. Even under the best scenarios, wild cattle seem to find a way to antagonize people. The emergency side release is for real use, not for looks. Cattle that flip or turn around in the chute are not going to go out the front. The real solution is a one-way ticket to the feed yard.

Sometimes, we only can smile at our own stupidity, such as the times that the only way we could get the cattle in the alley so they could be moved into the chute process was to offer up a human sacrifice. The one who drew the short straw had to entice the cattle into the chutes, knowing well the only reason the cattle are flowing is that they intended to maim you at the end of the chute.

A cow arrives in the chute and kicks the restraining back bar so hard the 2-inch steel bar is bent and wrenched into the holding socket. Several minutes later, after the bar has been freed, the cowhand looks up and says: "She's ready now."

"Isn't that the same cow that went through the pickup cab last year?" was the casual comment. Yes, the cow jumped through the pickup cab after the cowhand jumped in the cab for safety, only to find out the door did not get shut in time. She followed.

"Why is she still here?" I ask. "Well, she is a good cow," the hand responds.

The bottom line is to cull those darn ornery, wild cows because no one needs them.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>. For more information, contact the NDBCIA Office, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601, or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.

