

Training Module: Understanding Livestock Behavior

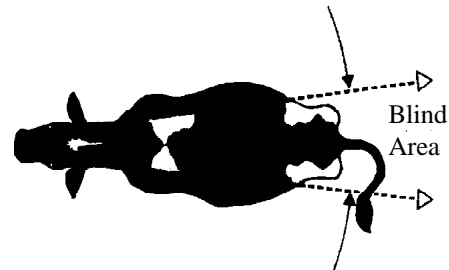
Objective: To know the animal's natural instincts and follow them to enhance personal safety.

Trainer's Note: Poor judgment and lack of understanding contribute to accidents with livestock. Knowing how and why livestock react leads to a safer work environment. To avoid accidents, develop workers' competencies in the following areas of animal behavior: Practice livestock handling procedures. Evaluate employee knowledge of animal behavior.

Background

Beef, swine, sheep, and dairy cattle are generally colorblind and have poor depth perception. This can cause the animal to balk or resist when handled. Sheep have difficulty seeing small details like an open gate.

Cattle, horses, and mules have a **panoramic field of vision**. This means they can see everywhere but behind them. Approach these animals from the side or front to prevent startling them. Horses and mules commonly kick toward their hindquarters, while cows kick forward and out. Injured cows will kick from the side of the injury.



Livestock with young exhibit strong maternal instinct, and can be difficult to handle. Let the young stay close to the mother when handling or moving. Always move with caution when working with a mother and her young.

Most animals exhibit strong territorial instinct and will develop a sense of “homeland” in their pens, corrals and pastures. Considering these traits, it becomes easy to understand why animals hesitate when moving through unfamiliar surroundings. Forcible removal can cause unpredictable behavior. Animals are sensitive to noise and become easily frightened. Move quietly and slowly when handling livestock. Animals remember past experiences and respond accordingly. Animals that have been chased, slapped, kicked or frightened when young will fear being approached.

Animal behaviors:

- Most animals respond to calm, gentle, and consistent handling.
- Livestock become skittish when their ordinary routines or familiar surrounding change.
- Animal have a definite social order.
- Domestic livestock, especially cattle and sheep, are herd animals. They may become agitate when isolated and will try to return to the group.
- Livestock detect people by their movement, which is much more important to animals than what is moving.

When working with animals:

- Move calmly, deliberately, and patiently. Avoid quick movements or loud noises that may startle animals.
- The daily routine or the animals' living conditions should not be altered. Animals often balk at anything out of the ordinary.
- Always leave an escape route when working in close quarters with animals.
- Avoid startling the animal. Make it aware of your approach before getting too close to it.

Review The Following Points

- Beef, swine, sheep, and dairy are colorblind.
- Cattle, horses, and mules have a panoramic field of vision.
- Livestock have strong maternal instinct.
- Livestock develop a strong bond to pens and pastures.
- Animals respond to the way they are treated by humans in past experiences
- Livestock are sensitive to noise and frightened easily

True or False Answer Key

1. T, 2. F, 3. T, 4. T, 5. T

Understanding Livestock Behavior Quiz

True or False

Name _____

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Cattle, horses, and mules have a panoramic field of vision. | T | F |
| 2. Employees don't need to understand animal behavior. | T | F |
| 3. Most animals exhibit a strong territorial instinct and will develop a sense of homeland in their pens, corrals and pastures. | T | F |
| 4. Work cautiously with a mother and her young. | T | F |
| 5. Animals respond to the way they are treated and will draw upon past experience when reacting to a situation. | T | F |