

chapter nine

Before heading out on the range

Green riders shouldn't ride green horses. That's a recipe for wrecks.

Don't expect that you'll be able to gather and pull a large herd together and place them on the range unless the herd has been well handled first. Use the techniques in Chapter Eight to get the herd calm and responsive. You will also need to practice with the cattle so you can learn to pressure and position yourself properly.

This initial herd work and practice should take place in an appropriate place. Don't hamstring yourself by having to learn **and** do it on the side of a mountain.

How long it takes to get cattle good enough to turn out on the range depends on how roughly they have been handled in the past, how sensitive their dispositions are and the experience and dedication of the current handler.

It's better to try a technique at first that gets less of a reaction rather than one that causes over-reaction. Build up slowly while you're learning. You can always shift up to a more direct, higher-pressure technique or change your speed and angle if you need too.

Stock behavior, body language, and movement will tell you what is just right for the situation.



Take time to talk before heading out on the range. *Photo by Linda Hestag.*

Before heading out on the range

As you start working the herd, approach stock carefully and at a flat angle, assuming they are apprehensive or fearful of being handled. Watch them as you approach and then determine where you need to start and what technique might be appropriate.

The most sensitive animals determine which technique and approach to take. Otherwise, they will take off and spook the others, and getting them working will take a lot longer.

Some basic rules

First, a few common sense rules as you begin working stock.

Work the stock in an easy place. Approach carefully, building up to more pressure as they show they will accept it calmly. Get them good at all techniques before taking them on range.

Also change what you are doing if:

- It isn't safe for you.
- It isn't safe for the animals. You might have some injuries if stock start climbing the chute walls or panic going through gates.
- The stock aren't calmer and more responsive after a training lesson or handling than they were before. New stock should improve rather quickly when you're handling them right. Stock that are working well for you should stay that way.

If any of these things happen—or you suspect they are about to—change what you're doing.

Ask an experienced handler for help if you can't figure out what you're doing wrong or if you have aggressive stock and don't feel safe about it. Don't risk a wreck for you or your horse.

Strategies for getting animals calm and responsive

Two basic strategies are effective for getting animals to respond well to handling.

Strategy one: Work every animal in the bunch as an individual until each one accepts basic pressure calmly and responsively. This way, you can know that all the stock will at least go straight when you pressure them as a herd.

Once stock are good with the basics, teach them to drive and work well as a herd. This is also a good way for you to gain experience and ensure you've checked all the stock for calmness and responsiveness.

Stock being fed on hay fields or corrals is usually an adequate set up. If you feed hay during the winter, most get fairly calm with people around them.

Work pregnant cows well before they calve. Then work the calves when they are old enough.

Pick a time when the stock aren't feeding, thirsty, or otherwise distracted. Put them in a big corral if you like. This way if you make a mistake—and you will—you won't have too far to go to get them.

Strategy two: Start working stock as a herd on a larger pasture without working every individual first. This is potentially more difficult for someone just learning, especially on rough or brushy pasture or range. There is more potential for some sensitive animals to overreact and take off, spin around, or go a long ways away.

Whichever strategy you chose to use, I recommend you start working stock on foot, even if you ride a stockhorse. You will probably have to work on foot sometime, so learn to walk and

pressure in straight lines. Walking a straight line when working stock isn't as easy as you might think and requires some concentration and practice.

Riders without a horse to help them go get their mistakes somehow seem to be a bit more careful about how they work the stock initially. Light, supple stockhorses are uncommon, so graduate to horseback once you get skilled on foot and after your horse becomes highly obedient and calm.

Don't try to train a colt to work cattle by working sensitive cattle that aren't calm about being handled. If you can't control the horse to be as precise as you are on foot, I recommended you read the book by Charles O. Williamson and study the tapes by Ed Techick of Arco, Idaho (see References for details).

Work individual animals

I prefer to get a herd ready for turnout by handling each animal until I see calm responses to every technique.

Once all the individuals in a herd are good to handle, I switch to working them in small groups or altogether. I want them to experience that staying and driving well together as a herd, turning, speeding up, slowing, and stopping is profitable.

If you can approach animals within a reasonable distance, start checking individual animals to see how they take proper pressure. Work them to go straight. Pressure individuals hanging around, whatever direction they are facing. If a lot of them are facing the same direction and you start pressuring some into their sides, you might start a drive, which isn't what you're working for here.

Calmer stock can usually take some direct pressure from an angle off to their sides so they can easily see you when they move a few yards ahead. Instructions for how to do this are contained in this chapter (see page 87).

Work each animal to see if they all slow when you go up the sides with the direction of movement and speed up when you go against the direction of movement.

When slowing them, keep going by to see if they all stop when you get past. Back off a ways and see if they are standing still and calm. They also need to turn well, left or right.

Once they do all this calmly and consistently, you can think about putting them together and teaching them to drive as a herd, to go through gates, speed up, slow down, turn, and stay put.

Working groups

The second set-up I use to get animals to respond well to handling is to start working a group or even the whole herd. I do this on the range a lot, because I usually need them to be working for me by dark.

You can get a group of animals to understand that pressure has a release and that you aren't going to be aggressive by drifting them as long and far as it takes for this to happen. When they are calm, you can then switch to teaching them to drive well, turn as a herd, etc.

Doing it this way, however, means you don't have the chance to practice the techniques and principles in an easy place and at a leisurely pace. More sensitive stock will undoubtedly take off running or take side trails. Calves will run back, etc. Some cattle in the middle of the bunch might not be quite as calm about handling as you will want. This can be overlooked when moving a big herd.

If you have cattle that are real sensitive like those on the range might be, don't start out with direct pressure into their sides. You must use the instructions on getting closer to sensitive stock (see pages 37 and 92).

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How to handle aggressiveness

Watch for signs of aggression when you first approach stock. Don't ignore or tolerate it. Bad handling caused it, and good handling will correct and prevent it from reoccurring.

Modern beef breeds are not, by nature, inclined to fight first. Some of them will fight, but unless they are inflicted by a rare and tropical disease, they only do so based on past experiences that created the reaction that they should fight.

Beef cattle won't fight if they view you as non-threatening and you are boss of the herd.

Some yearlings will bawl and run at you if you back off too many times when first handling them. You can stop this by squaring up with them or, if you have to, by raising an arm or your hat. They will squeal and turn away.

If you see indications of real aggression and don't know how to handle it safely, get out of the situation. If you can't, back off of what you were doing just a bit, but stand firm (unless they are going to follow through with the charge).

When the aggression is over, determine what caused it and how to correct it. It might be safer to put the stock into a place where it's safer to work them. In a corral, you might want to work them from outside the corral. If you are on pasture or range, you may want to work on a good stockhorse instead of on foot.

Carefully ask the aggressive animal to do something very simple, like just look at you. Approach (pressure) its head and when it looks at you, release the pressure and wait. Wait longer than you think you should. If it looks away, pressure again, until it looks at you. Then back up and wait a minute. If the animal looks away, apply just a bit of pressure. If it looks back at you, relax and quit pressuring.

It should get the message real soon that you aren't aggressive, and that it can control pressure by looking at you and then by continuing to look at you. This is the start of getting aggressive animals to experience that they can work for you and that it profits them to do so.

From there, if it's getting the idea, you can ask the animal to take a step forward. When it does, back off and wait. Progress from there, carefully rewarding positive responses until thoughts of fighting are gone.

If you cause aggression by pushing an animal too hard or in too small a space, correct it by going back to simpler, step-by-step requests. It will forgive this mistake quickly. Work in a bigger space if necessary.

In all the animals I've worked, I've had only two that tried to fight me. It was my fault in both cases.

I've had only one animal persist in trying to run me over in spite of using all the tricks I knew. It was a mother cow that came charging out of a bunch that I was just approaching to start working. I was on the range, and the other rider was just going over the crest of a hill when it all started. He was ponying my horse to the trailer to get us fresh horses while I worked these afoot. He also had the dog.

The cow started to charge, and since I was pretty sure she would follow through, I just stood firm. As she got close, I stuck out my hat in her face and moved to the side.

I eventually kept her from charging by driving other cows at her, but it took getting horseback again to stop it. On a good horse and now with a dog, I ached to teach her a real lesson, but I didn't. I was supposed to be helping the crew learn about stockmanship, placing a herd, and setting a decent example. I was quite sure she had rabies or some sickness that affected her mind (but not her stamina).

I guess the moral of this story is, stuff happens and getting mad with animals that can't reason is fairly pointless. You don't win a thing.

Don't shove

Shoving stock can create unwanted behavior.

Many people get pokey stock going or catch cows in the riparian area and then "shove" for good measure to keep them going.

Shoving means you pressured, they did the right thing (moved straight ahead), and then you pressured them again while they were doing it. This is the wrong thing to do.

You can't tell them to move twice in a row and expect it to have more meaning to them. Instead, it will have a different meaning.

If the time interval between two or more pressure cues is too short, the stock interpret this as continual pressure (the same lesson) and then try something else to relieve the pressure. They think, "Hey, I moved off but the pressure is still coming," so they do something else like speed up.

**Individual animals—
taking basic pressure explained**

Pressure into the side (Diagram page 68)

Start working an individual animal to respond well to pressure by pressuring into its side. Approach straight into its side at an angle behind the shoulder a bit and towards the front ribs.



Work it first in a big enough area so you can step in and out of the flight zone if possible. If you're working in a small corral, you may already be in the flight zone. This isn't wrong necessarily, but here you will need to work the animal so it will learn or trust that you will only come so close.

As you approach the animal, you will probably make the unavoidable mistake of moving too close (to find the working flight zone distance), and the animal may move off too fast.

Approach again and use this "mistake" to make a mental note of the flight zone distance so you don't move in too close. Watch the animal carefully for signs it is going to move or not.

Before heading out on the range

Once you've found the zone on a herd or individual, then work just in and just out on the edge of the flight zone. Some beginning handlers move farther back out than they need to and waste motion. Work right on the edge.

The average animal should move straight ahead in the direction it was facing as a result of direct pressure on any place on its sides (ribs).

The only real bad places to pressure cattle are from directly behind or ahead of them. You can follow from far behind or lead them from directly ahead, but don't pressure them from these locations for any length of time.

In general, you can tell if you're too much directly behind or too far away if the animal turns to see you.



This calf shows that the rider is too far back or too much directly behind.

If it does, get closer, move back and forth, or move up toward the front and pressure from there. If you can see any part of the animal's eye, it can see you. Make sure whenever you pressure that you can see its eye.

Start handling calmer animals by pressuring from an approach angle near the front. This is easier for the animal to do, because it can see you easily as it moves straight ahead.

When the animal moves, all you're asking for at this point is to move a step of two. When it does, quit pressuring (release) and give the animal a few steps (end the lesson). Get yourself out of the flight zone or let the animal move itself away to relieve pressure.

Although the following steps are a more complicated approach than you usually need, you may run into some sensitive animals that require all or some of these.

Going away straight is actually comprised of the animal...

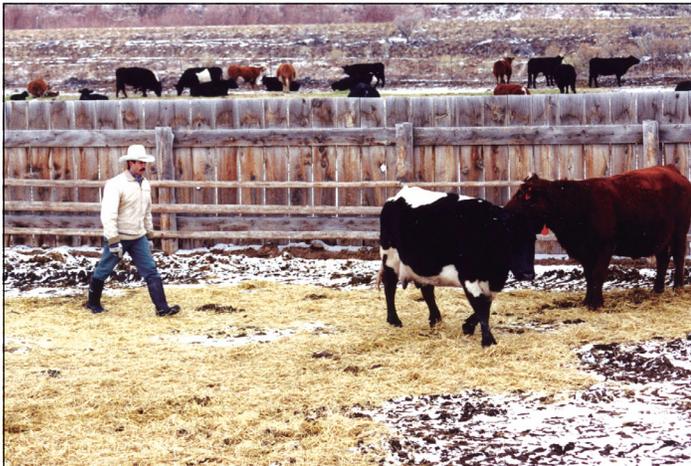
1. Being calm enough to stand and allow you to pressure its side effectively from a reasonably close distance.
2. Move its feet when you pressure.
3. Move its feet consistently when pressured.
4. Move its feet consistently and go straight ahead.
5. Do all this consistently and with good movement.
6. Do all this with good movement and keep going for a long enough distance to attract others to go with it.

Once you understand the mechanics of moving straight ahead, you can start training a particularly difficult animal at step one and get her good at that level before moving on. If you get a poor response at any level, go back to practicing whatever you can get her to do well before going on again.

Pressure into the side-from an angle nearer the tail (see diagram on page 68)

From pressure applied toward the front, you now have an animal that walks straight ahead with good movement and keeps going far enough to attract others to follow consistently (and prompts her to keep going).

Now, approach the animal from a sharper angle from its rear and pressure toward the shoulder and head. This pressure is a little harder for the animal to be comfortable with because it is harder for it to see you, both on your approach and after it leaves. But it needs to be okay with this. Do this until it walks straight ahead and at a good pace. If it slows too soon, immediately pressure again and it should move right out, even at farther and farther distances away from you.



You can also use this technique to increase the flight zone on animals that don't think they should keep moving very far.

When first pressured, an animal may jump out and not move straight. This tells you it is very concerned about seeing you and waited while the pressure built up too much. It hasn't experienced enough times that you aren't aggressive and doesn't understand what it can do to relieve pressure.

Approach a little more carefully the next time, ask a little lighter, and see if you can get it to go more calmly. Do this a few times until it is walking out straight-ahead with good movement.

Good movement is a comfortable walk for the animal but a pace that attracts others to join in.

In the case of stock that just get out of your way and then slow or stop, you've created the problem by ceasing pressure and ending the lesson after they just moved ahead a little without following up.

Cattle get calm quickly when handled without force. But if you want a drive, don't let them think that moving ahead a few feet is all they need to do. Prevent this from happening early on in handling. As soon as stock move comfortably from your pressure, teach them they must go and keep going a reasonable distance. Set a "keep going" distance that's far enough to allow you time to get some other animals going with good movement.

With those that just move to let you by, pressure them to go and keep going with good movement. Watch them carefully. Stick with any single animal that does this until it moves out well and keeps moving. Herds (and horses) that do this get the dander up on riders like almost nothing else. Just as they get the idea of slowing, come at them from the side, pressuring firmly before they slow or stop. Your timing must be good. Square up and come right into their sides if you need to.

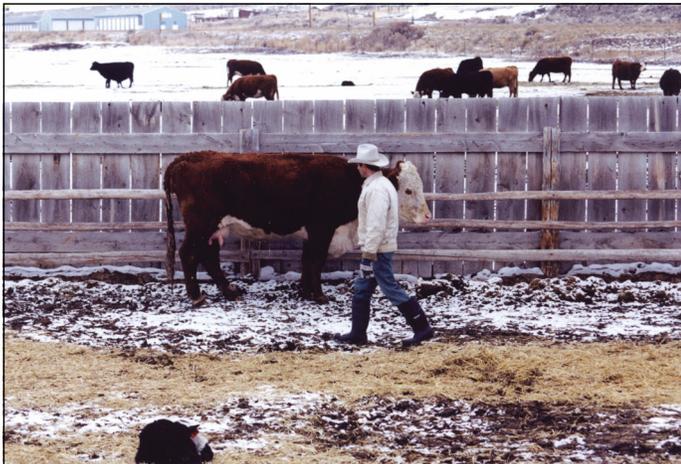
You may have to repeat this a time or two until they move away from you at longer distances and keep going long enough to attract others to go with them. Pretty soon you'll notice a slow poke wanting to slow, and all you have to do is turn towards it and it will move right out.

Before heading out on the range

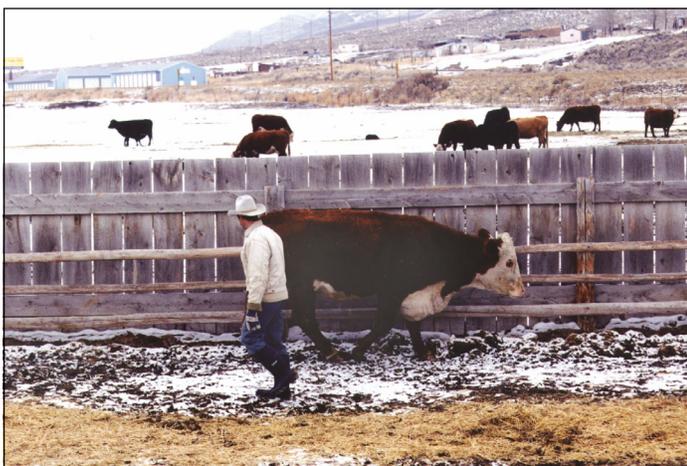
You are done with this lesson when all the animals respond consistently to your pressure at various angles into their sides and move out at a good walk, in the direction they were facing.

Going by you—starting or speeding them up (see diagram on page 72)

Let your stock experience that it's okay to go by you by approaching them from the front and off to one side a bit just within the flight zone and walk toward the back. Go right straight by it.



Walk straight by



Cow should walk straight ahead with good movement

The cow should go straight ahead with good movement if it was standing still—or speed up if it was already moving by. It should react by moving straight on by you when you get near its heads and shoulders. If it peels out or spins off, you need to repeat this until it is quite relaxed with it. You may need to move a little farther out or go slower.

When moving animals, remember always to allow them to get out of the flight zone when pressured or to get yourself out of it, or both. Resist the urge to send them on their way when they are going right.

Now that your stock know that it's okay to respond calmly to pressure into the sides and go by you, they will respond better to handling in the field—and to anything else you cue them to do. It usually takes only minutes or less with each individual (of average disposition), so don't get discouraged about the time it takes to train a lot of animals.

Slow down and stop

If you want to slow an animal that is walking because you're driving it, simply back off the pressure. Calm animals will slow down and should stop.

If you've been moving them for awhile, they may keep going even if you back off because they probably think this is what you want. So you have to do something more to slow and stop them.

Walk up the side of an animal in the direction it is going. She should slow as you get to her shoulder. She should stop if you get past the shoulder.

If some animals don't slow or stop, you have a few options. If the stock aren't stopping because of past experiences (they think they shouldn't), then I get ahead of them a ways and zigzag back and forth until they stop.

Before heading out on the range

You might also have to get ahead and cut in straight across, perpendicular to the direction they are going. Let them rest a minute as a reward when they slow or stop.

If they just aren't comfortable yet with you on the sides, they might speed up. In this case, I stop going up the sides and spend a little more time just pressuring them to go ahead, or turn them some more until they are calmer and will let me go up the sides without overreacting.

Turning left or right (see diagram on page 70)

Neck: You can turn an individual animal away from you by pressuring directly into its neck.



You can turn an animal across and out in front of you by pressuring its hip away from you.

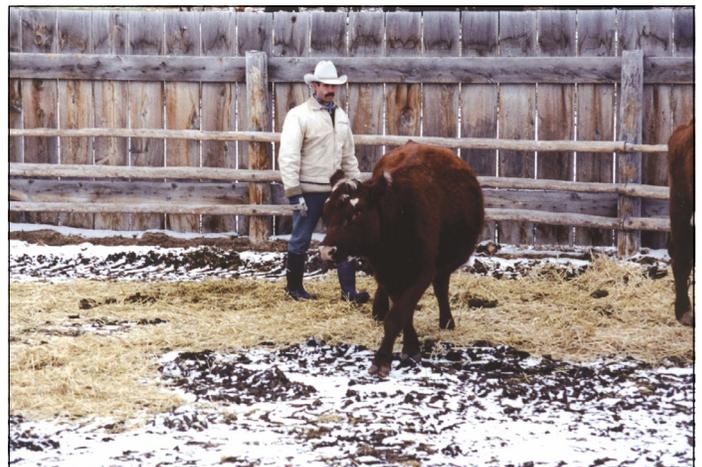
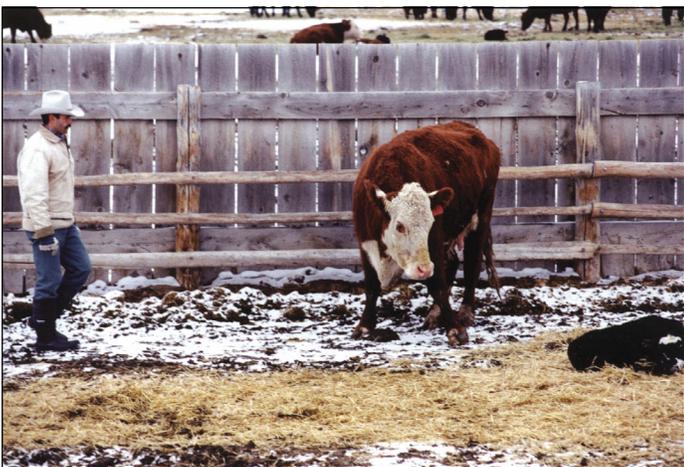
I like to check animals to see if they will turn calmly when I pressure their hips or neck. If you direct pressure the neck on the left side, the animal should turn its head and shoulders away to the right.

Pressure the neck on the right side and the head and shoulder will move to the left. This is similar to a turn on the haunches with a horse. They should turn whether walking or standing still.

If you want to get a real snappy turn to the left, pressure the left side of her neck exactly when her right front shoulder is just starting to come forward. You would do this on the range mostly if you just wanted to show off.

Hips: If you want the animal to turn to the left from a position on the left, then pressure the hip and the hip will move away from you. Pressure on the left hip will cause a standing cow to turn her haunches out and pivot more on her front legs. As a result, she turns to the left.

Pressure the hips from the right side and she will turn to the right (wrap around you if you keep at it.) (See diagram on page 69)



Before heading out on the range

Handling wilder stock

To get sensitive stock comfortable with you being around

You need to be able to get close enough to work sensitive cattle effectively and efficiently before you start applying direct pressure into their sides or go by them.

The easiest, least pressure way to get stock working is to just be around them without asking for anything. Stand quietly far enough away from the herd so there is little chance they will leave but close enough so they know you are there.

With sensitive stock you may have to do this for 10 to 15 minutes or more. Just watch them and let them get used to you being there. Wait for them to relax before progressing.

How to get closer to sensitive stock

When stock are comfortable with you around, approach them at a flat angle, never directly head on, by walking or riding straight lines back and forth. Then retreat just before they move off. The animals are okay with you around, but not perhaps with you asking them to move yet, and you still need to obtain a workable flight zone distance.

If the stock get nervous, back off and relax to let them know that pressure has a release and they don't have to bolt from you to get that release. You want them to see that they can control pressure and that you'll back off whenever they show signs of concern.

At the end of each pass, edge a little closer toward them and ride a straight line across again, edging closer each pass. Don't take your eyes off the stock. Approach only to where you feel the animal will move (like when a head goes up) and then back off (release pressure) before it does.

After you back off, stand still and wait to end the lesson. The edgier the stock, the longer you might need to wait. This lets them know you only wanted to get that close and won't keep coming if it bothers them. Watch for a relaxed look and posture before approaching closer each time.

If they aren't relaxed, back off and wait. Usually if they are grazing or have their heads lowered otherwise, they have relaxed enough to get closer.

Work a herd or an individual this way until you've attained the distance you want to work them from. From this point, you can start getting them to respond calmly to moving from straight lines back and forth, direct pressure into their sides, or whatever is appropriate for the animal or herd.

How to approach, bunch, and get pairs mothered up

Before working a herd to move together, walk around to let them know you're there so you don't jump any.

If you're working pairs, then disturb them just enough to so they get the idea they are going to move. They should get up, look for their calves or mothers, and get mothered up. Cows can go to the calves or calves to the cows. Either way is fine. Allow yourself the time it takes to get this accomplished. If animals are bedded, bump them just enough so they get up, stretch and dung or urinate.

Don't pressure unpaired animals to move on with good movement or they may forget about their calves (many first calf heifers will) and leave them. Cows and calves don't necessarily have to be side by side when moving, but they should know where each other are.

Moving a herd

Getting movement started

To start movement in a herd, use the good movement of the ones you start to attract others to go with them. Before starting a drive, bunch cattle up just enough so this can happen. Be prompt about pressuring a number of them in a short time so movement attracts movement. But be careful about getting too much movement.

Approach sensitive stock until just before you think they may move off. They will let the pressure build up as you approach. One way of encouraging them to move off without that first step getting too big is to stop, back up a step or two, and then move your horse's head or your shoulders (if on foot) slightly back and forth. This should help start movement and avoid an over-reaction. Let them go a ways off before you follow up the movement.

At this point, you probably don't need to focus on keeping the movement going. It's okay if they go off a ways and then stop if they are nervous. If they do stop, you should also stop and back off a step or two.

Work to develop a feel for approaching and judging when they will move. Then back off before it builds too much.

Once the stock don't feel they should take off whenever you show up, starting movement might require the following:

- Walk straight lines back and forth across the bunch within the flight zone. Let the stock move off and/or step back once they go.
- Walk a zigzag type pattern across the herd within the flight zone, angling closer with each line until they move.

- Walk directly into the sides of animals, one at a time, rapidly going from one to another.
- Walk right up and stand next to any animal that isn't moving until it moves. This might have to be done with real quiet stock that don't want to move or think they don't have to.

You can also lead a herd. One person leads the cows and using the above techniques, a dog or person drives from behind. The lead rider needs to be sure he or she isn't slowing or turning the stock and stays close enough to draw them with his or her movement.

Stock will need some practice at following a lead rider before they do this well. But it's a great way to move a herd and probably the lowest stress way I can think of. Cattle like to follow something.

When the stock are together, pressure them using any or combinations of the above techniques.

When moving a herd versus individuals, you'll be working it's collective flight zone. Finding it is usually easiest by going back and forth, edging closer in with each pass until the stock start to move. When they first go off, you may have to back off pressure as they do. Backing off helps control movement, because often a herd will allow you closer and the pressure to build while they are deciding which way to go. If you don't ease the pressure, they may go off too fast.

Let the herd decide which direction they go at first. Give them at least two ways to go so they won't feel trapped or get panicky.

Before heading out on the range

If you use direct pressure on individuals in front of others, back off a bit to allow them to follow the movement you started. Get out of the way so others can follow.

When some go, keep encouraging movement and all should go. You should only have to pressure a small percentage of the herd. The rest should join in. Get the leaders going and watch them. They have the longest flight zone, so you can effectively get them going without having to affect the others. Others will follow the leaders.

Once the herd has chosen a direction, go with it and keep the stock moving. If you have a group that is too spread out, you'll have difficulty keeping them all going.

If you have a herd that wants to split or individuals that stray off, you have the choice to keep working the ones in front of you or working those that split.

Remember, you can use any techniques you need to start the herd going—straight lines behind, zig-zag pattern, or direct pressure to the sides. Some may go if you just stand there or lean into them. You need to find out which is best.

The idea with starting an untrained herd out is to encourage them to move and allow them to come together. If you pressure them first to move **and** go the way you want, it will be a bit too much for some of them, and you'll have some stress.

But resist the urge to curve around and tuck in the corners. Just keep straight lines, back and forth. Persist. They will come together.

With an untrained herd on the range

A herd on the range is usually bunches scattered around the unit. Whether working small bunches or one big herd, the approach is similar in concept.

I usually work scattered bunches first. As they work better, I let them go to the main herd. I gather all the bunches until I have a herd, then work them so they can experience that driving with a herd is comfortable, which rekindles their herd instinct. Animals you find first in the main herd are usually calmer and not so likely to be an immediate problem, so I usually leave those for last.

I like to drift graze an unworked herd on the range, sometimes for quite some time, until they all get the idea that they can work for me. Approach, mother up and gather the herd as described in previous instructions and according to the sensitivity of the cattle. Many times you will want to just ride lines back and forth, shorter or longer as needed, until you see calmness about it.

When the herd has been drifted until calm, think about asking them to start driving well (come together better and walking with good movement).

Either way, the herd might split and go different ways after going a short distance, or the front might motor on away from the rest, usually picking the toughest, worst place they can find.

If this happens, pick a group to work, get them trained, and then incorporate them into another bunch or the herd. I usually pick the rowdiest bunch to work first, because they will take off the farthest and usually find a good place to hide out.

When driving pairs

You'll likely find that cows and calves will separate when first driving, but work to get and keep them mothered up as much as possible.

Cows without calves or vice-versa are usually too anxious to learn much from a handler. It may take some time for first-calf heifers, especially, to calm down and stay with the calves. During training, when the herd is responding better, you can bunch them together at some point and give them a chance to re-mother up if needed. Take the time you need to start them mothered. Stop as often as you need to get them re-mothered. Move them very slowly (drifting and grazing) if that is what it takes to keep them mothered up. This is an especially valuable technique if you have small calves.

Drift grazing stock is also a good way to train them to be comfortable with you and correct pressure.

Use the least amount of pressure you need to get them going and keep going. Don't worry too much about animals that are off to the side or lagging behind. Give them a chance and let them come. They usually will if the rest are moving well. If you worry too much about these and break off to get them, you can easily lose the movement of the main herd.

Once the herd is going, you'll see which animals are real sensitive to pressure. They will be at the front. You can now start to ascertain the herd's training needs. Some herds move off okay but don't want to stop. Some are so gentle (like some dairy herds), they are hard to move well. Some want to scatter off in different directions. Lucky riders may have all of these types.

After driving stock a bit, it's common to see some of the lead animals really move off. Cows may leave their calves. They're on the march and getting way ahead of the main herd. They are showing you they are uncom-

fortable with your pressure and don't look at the herd as the place to be.

Correct this by showing them they can respond to pressure without over-reacting to it. Leave the rest and take the time to work with these leaders. If you don't correct this, you won't get the herd to drive well, stay together, or stay placed.

Don't try to keep a herd grouped by shoving the back to keep up with the front. If stock in the lead are running off, leave the followers and go with the lead.

You want to get them to understand they don't have to avoid pressure by taking off and that they can't. Don't let the stock end the lesson on this note. Work them as a group of especially sensitive animals. When they are calmer, responding well to your cues and turning okay, drift them back into the main herd. When they are back in the main bunch, wait a few minutes to let them all settle. You want them to see that being with the bunch is okay—and you get to rest with them a minute.

Sometimes there are animals that seem to just "know" where we're going and get ahead too far. You want them to get the idea that staying close with the group is comfortable.

With ones like this, the idea is to get their attention on you. Go get them and work them until they take pressure calmly. When they do, turn them back into the main group.

Through all this initial training, don't be concerned about direction or where they are going. You want to get proper movement away from pressure into their sides down first. Practice getting them comfortable and responsive to moving off from pressure well and leaders not splitting off from the herd. You want to see that pairs are comfortable enough with handling to stay together better.

Before heading out on the range

You should expect to have a number of animals leave the bunch or get too far ahead in the beginning, but you want a semblance of a herd with animals starting to get the idea of staying and moving together. For the ones that leave, take extra time to work until they are calm.

Driving well

When stock are staying together fairly well, it's time to get them driving well. Herds need to be taught to do this.

Driving well means the stock stay together and move at a comfortable pace. Only slight pressure is needed to keep them going in the direction they are headed. There is no bumping, crowding or weaving. Pairs are mothered up. They aren't distracted by green grass, going by other stock, or variations in terrain. There's no fooling around. They are single minded on you. They follow the movement of others, and their movement attracts others to go with it.

They will come to experience only by driving this way that they will get some measure of release of pressure from you.

To encourage driving well and keep it

Get the herd together without crowding or jamming them. Use techniques that get good movement.

To teach a herd to drive well, work it to go with good movement, zigzagging and pressuring individuals from behind as needed.

Don't be afraid to really apply the pressure and persist as long as it takes to get what you want. Relax a bit when they do what you want, follow the movement, going back and forth when they are going well. Get back in to keep them going and to speed them up if they slow. Do this as many times as it takes to get them responsive to pressure. Whenever they reach the pace you want, release (relax) pressure a bit.

Don't be fooled—animals are very aware when you do this.

Concentrate on moving the leaders of the herd while the herd is moving. Watch the leaders and how they are going. They are the ones that are the most sensitive to pressure (bigger flight zone) and the ones that are drawing others to go with them.

Pressure or accommodate any that slow or veer away.

Create movement that attracts movement. Pressure if movement slows. Back off if it goes a bit too fast.

Pressure or follow any that take a side trail until they want to turn back in, then let them. Some of them will keep doing this until they get comfortable with what you want and with being in a moving herd. Go with any that want to race ahead and leave the bunch.

Avoid bulges or dips in the herd and try to keep a fairly close, even line across the back of the herd. Don't ride up the sides or curve around them. Drive them this way until you can back off some and they still stay together and move well. This shows they are getting the idea.

A herd that seems to be difficult to move will seemingly all of a sudden flow together and go if you quietly persist in asking for that. Now they are getting the idea to go straight with good movement and keep going as a herd. Make this real comfortable for them. Just go with them and follow the movement, pressuring as lightly or as much as needed to keep them going.

Move the herd as much as it takes for them to drive well, perhaps an hour or more, depending on the sensitivity of the animals and your skill level.

The method behind getting them to drive well is to practice lessons to move straight away, move out well (with good movement), slow down or speed up, stay with the herd, and keep going. All stock should be going straight. Most animals will relax and be comfortable with all this very soon.

If calves or cows are tired, give them a rest. Keep the pace a little slower for pairs with small calves and rest them as you need to, or you'll end up with a pile of little ones at the back end.

Three ideas for slowing or stopping a herd

One. Stop pressuring or prompting them to keep moving. Let them slow. With cattle that are quiet and responsive to the rider, especially when they are tired, all that's required to slow them is to change to a lower pressure technique like straight lines behind if you were formerly zigzagging and/or direct pressure. This will slow the lead, and the rest should slow.

If you want a stop, drift the herd a ways and back off all pressure, then get out of the pressure zone.

Two. Encourage them to slow. With stock that handle well but want to keep going, you'll need to use some additional techniques.



Walk up the side to slow the herd.

First, everyone should back off pressuring them to go and just follow from behind. Go up the sides with the flow or direction of movement within the flight zone. They should slow with a rider out to the side and perhaps even stop as you go past each one. You can adjust this to some degree by how far in the zone you are, how far you go up past them, and when you relax pressure. Move outwards if they turn away and in closer if there is too little effect.

Release pressure when you are at the sides by going out wider when they do slow and stop.

If they stay on the march and try to keep ahead, let them. Go back to practicing driving well or turning and going by you and then try slowing them again. This tests how well you are handling them and their understanding that they won't be forced or bothered.

Practice getting them comfortable with you going up the sides first before going to the front, because it's easier for some of them to take this than you being up front.

Three. Cause them to slow. Herds sometimes feel they should move fast and keep going. They are on the march, don't respond to easing of pressure, and don't slow when you go up the sides. You can slow some of these herds by persisting with staying out on the sides. Some you can't.

If you can't get them to slow or stop by being on the sides, go to the lead and zigzag in front until all have slowed. Then let them walk at a comfortable walk for a time. Don't crowd or stop them while they are walking nicely. They may have the idea they need to keep going at all costs, or perhaps they are single-minded on going where they think they should.

Before heading out on the range

If they don't respond well to slowing when you are up front and zigzagging, switch to riding ahead without trying to influence them much. Keep ahead and be patient. Soon they will get the idea it's okay to slow down. Be sure you're not pressuring them too much to slow—just let them slow. They will when they realize it's okay.

When placing stock, you'll want to slow them down and drift them to the spot you want them to stay in. This is partly why you will need to practice slowing them by reducing pressure and doing straight lines behind. You'll want to be able to get their minds off moving without forcing them to slow or stop.

If you force or put too much pressure on to slow, movement will take another direction. Switching to straight lines behind usually gets a calm herd to slow and drift.

If you are working wild cattle on the range and can't get ahead of them, follow behind. Go slower than they are and stop when they stop. This is the same instruction as described in working sensitive animals.

Speed up a herd

- Bunch the herd up more so they are closer together. If they are too spread out, movement of some won't attract movement from the others enough.
- Change from straight lines behind to zigzagging.
- Change from zigzagging to direct pressuring. Pressure directly into the sides of animals at the back of the herd. Take a very deliberate faster walk at them when you pressure.

- Concentrate on speeding up the leaders. Work the middle of the back more so you get closer to the leaders, then direct pressure into the sides of animals that are off to your sides to encourage the back to get going.
- Go up to the front of the herd or animal and then straight back against the direction of movement (or opposite the way its facing) past the herd or animal.
- Get off the horse and work on foot, if necessary.
- Real calm animals may require you to try all of the above. With individuals that won't move at all, just stand real close off the side toward the back until they move. Don't get kicked!

Solving movement problems

Stock that lag behind the herd

Stock commonly hang back from the herd for a couple of different reasons. Decide what to do about it based on the cause.

First reason: Some animals are just slow to come with the herd. It takes them time to decide what to do. They may just not feel like leaving. They are usually looking intently at the herd or looking around to find a calf. Leave them alone. They'll probably come. If you have plenty of help, it won't hurt to send somebody to go get it while other riders keep the main group going. Doing this helps teach it to be timely about coming along, but you don't need to if you are busy and short of extra help. They invariably come along anyway. Don't force the animal back, though. If she takes a lot of encouragement to follow then you have other problems to fix.

Second reason: Some animals don't really want to be with the herd. They will often just turn and go another way or veer off to hide somewhere. They will often have little interest in what the rest of the herd is doing. They are sometimes bug-eyed, sensitive to pressure and watching you more than the herd.

Animals like this need good handling to overcome their concerns about you and being in the herd. Leave the herd to go work them. Stock that just up and leave the herd can be quitting the bunch, and you need to go with them. There are times when you may have caused them to leave by applying too much pressure. Be careful to distinguish whether you caused it or if the animal needs more work.

When you find you have to go back for an animal that is facing towards the herd, walk a bit off to its side and go straight by it, against the direction it is facing.

Bulls blocking traffic

When driving a herd of cows with bulls during breeding season, it's common to have bulls messing up movement by slowing or stopping some of the cows, blocking the gate, fighting with other bulls, etc. Moving a herd can get the bulls chasing cows and butting heads. This behavior can make it difficult to keep a herd going, so you'll want to address the problem if you have it.

The problem is caused because their attention has been diverted. Maybe you never really had their attention in the first place. Regain their attention by asking them to do something that you want. This can be going back to getting them good at pressure into their sides or driving well with the herd. Either way, ask them to do something else.

Every time a bull is fooling around or even thinking about it, I immediately pressure it to move ahead, speed up, turn, or whatever is appropriate. Go directly to the bull and direct him to move. Follow up with him to make sure he keeps going. The bull will soon learn that doing anything other than what you are asking produces firm pressure.

What you are trying to do is take that animal's single-mindedness on fooling around on to being single-minded about responding to your signals. Sometimes this takes only three or four times of pressuring and getting a positive response to get the bull to quit fooling around for good.

Difficulty keeping good movement

Difficulty getting and keeping good movement in a herd needs to be corrected.

Good movement means all pairs are mothered (or comfortable with where their calves are). All animals follow others that are going well. There isn't any crowding or weaving, and they move at a good walk when you pressure.

A good walk is one that attracts others to follow but is still a comfortable pace for the animal. If animals just plod along, they aren't attracting others to go, and you'll have to work real hard to keep a drive going.

The ideal situation is to get the leaders moving at a good walk and to let the rest flow in and follow. This creates the best type of movement and is easy to keep going. Always concentrate and focus on the lead animals. Get and keep them going at the pace you want.

All you have to do to keep good movement is follow and encourage them to keep going by watching and increasing the pressure a bit as you see signs of wanting to slow.

Before heading out on the range

Stock not comfortable with handling while in the herd

One reason for stock not moving well is because they aren't comfortable enough with your handling. This can cause them to weave, curve, split, slow up, or create some unmothered pairs.

To solve this problem, go back to drift grazing the herd until they get some calmness about that. Work up to driving when they are ready.

Build up to gathering them into a cohesive bunch and driving them with good movement. Take them back into a smaller area or corral if you need to and practice. Make sure they all understand to move away from pressure into their sides from nearer the back and to go by you.

Practice turning, slowing down, and speeding up using various techniques in a larger setting once they are good with the basics. Make sure the herd drives well on flat ground before expecting good drives on steep rangelands.

Always reward stock for each step they do right. And always end the lesson when teaching them anything.

Handler errors—going up the sides within the flight zone

The second—and perhaps more common—cause of poor movement is when handlers go up the sides of the herd and within the flight zone. This can cause the back ones to turn at the corners or at the sides crossways into the bunch, creating bumping, crowding, and slowing of some of the stock. Stock really hate being pushed from behind and slowed from the sides at the same time.

A common mistake is curving in on the sides of stock when riding straight lines behind them.

Correct this by walking straight lines behind and making sure you are out of the flight zone if you go up the sides.

There is nothing wrong with going up the sides to the front. Working the front can be an excellent way to get the stock across tough places or up steep hills. But be sure to go way out of the flight zone or you will slow the herd or cause bad movement of some sort that you don't want.

On more traditional cattle drives, it's a common practice to drive a herd by getting behind them and waving arms. Usually the stock go away from you and the noise, but you get all kinds of bad movement—bumping, crowding, walking too fast or too slow, not going straight, all at once.

Riders create this by going up the sides either to turn some in or bunch some up. Sometimes I have no idea why they are there, and neither do the stock. Doing this slows the herd behind the rider or turns animals in or across the direction of movement. Riders in the back compensate by shoving harder to keep them going, which can cause animals to start crowding and bumping and leaving calves. This is very stressful to the animals, and many get real uncomfortable being with the herd.

Think about your techniques and make sure the problem hasn't been caused by something you're doing wrong.

Here's some ways to correct problems if you think the handlers' position or actions are the problem (not that the stock just need more time to handle better for you):

- Make sure everyone stops doing things that stress the stock like making loud noise and shoving.
- Make sure you aren't using pressure to force them. Relax pressure when they reach the right pace and move together.

- If you must go up the sides to turn stock (at the head of the herd), go wide and outside of the flight zone so you don't affect them.
- Make sure all riders stay in a straight line, perpendicular to the direction you want them to go (see diagram on page 79 and photo on page 103).
- Remember that the main job of riders on the ends of the line is to guide herd direction. Riders in the middle part should generally be the ones keeping movement going. If you have three riders, the rider on the left is responsible for pressuring the left side harder (to speed them up) so the herd will turn to the right. For a turn to the left, this rider would be careful to back off the pressure on the left, allowing the left side to slow. Thus you can see that unless you are all working together correctly, you can give stock mixed signals and create stress in the entire herd rather quickly.
- Remember to go back and forth behind the herd. Watch to see that when you are going to one side or the other that you don't turn the lead animals too much left or right as you go wider to the side. Going back and forth too far or staying out too long will cause too much weaving in the lead animals, creating poor movement and bothering the animals. Watch for just a slight turn from the lead and then turn back the other way. Use your judgment and timing to go back and forth to keep the lead straight from then on.

Stock too calm

A third cause of hard to move stock is when the herd becomes really calm around the handlers and don't move out of fear. Having calm stock is great, but being hard to drive isn't. Some herds seem to think, "Hey, I don't think I have to move ahead except a few feet."

Livestock need to experience that they should keep going unless you ask them to slow or stop. Correct this by taking time with individual animals.

With a herd that is hard to keep going, keep pressuring quietly but persistently. They will soon understand that plodding along produces consistent pressure. As soon as they pick up the pace, relax the pressure a bit but don't throw the reins away. This may take 30 minutes or more of continued asking, especially with a herd that doesn't think they have to.

With a herd that slows and is getting hard to drive but is comfortable with your pressure, concentrate on asking them to slow or speed up before it's their idea to do it. Speed them up, then ask them to slow before they do it on their own. With practice, they will wait longer and longer to slow and will get to waiting for you.

With animals that stop and look or go to grazing, pressure them into their sides to go off with good movement. Watch what they do. If they even think about slowing, quickly go back and pressure again. Do this a few times, and they will learn to move and keep moving. Be patient. They will go soon and understand they need to go or you will keep the pressure on.

Make sure you're not shoving stock. Some people pressure animals real hard to go and when they do go, shove them for good measure.

Before heading out on the range

Stock shoved a lot like this will think moving isn't profitable, something like "Hey! If I go I get pressure. If I stop I get pressure. So I'll stay put because it's easier." I've seen this happen on the range where some cows refused to move at all for anything. This is abuse of the animal caused by a lack of knowledge.

Stalled out herd

Sometimes a herd will slow during a drive in spite of continued pressure by the riders. It might be going uphill, downhill, through a gate, or when the herd is getting tired.

When a herd is stalling out, the idea is to get the lead animals going with good movement again so the rest of the herd will be attracted to go with them.

With a stalled or stalling herd, you need to get closer to the ones in the lead, because the pressure zone has shrunk due to circumstances. You must get closer to the leaders so you can put enough pressure on them to go with good movement. To do this, work the herd from the middle section of the back more. Don't worry about covering ground across the back of the whole bunch in this case. Work the middle where you can best influence the lead animals.

As the middle portion moves up (away from you), this creates a pocket around you, with animals ahead and to your sides. Encourage the ones to your sides to really move out by applying direct pressure to their sides. Pressure, then step back, to let those behind follow it.

If cattle completely stop, such as they might when on a narrow trail going up or down a steep hill, working the middle might not produce what you want because the pressure zone of the lead has shortened so much.

In these cases I think the stock view the way as closed. Think about going up to the front and pressuring the lead animal into her side directly. Pressure firmly and step back to let others come, direct pressuring into the sides of the oncoming animals as needed to keep good movement.

Summary for getting and keeping good movement

The end goal of getting a herd to drive well is reached when the animals are all single-minded on doing what you ask, they follow the lead animals, and movement attracts movement.

The herd should move at a nice comfortable walk for whatever class of animal they are. They go straight and stay together (but not crowded) while moving. Pairs stay mothered up. They speed up when you increase pressure, slow down when it's reduced, and turn easily when you go out wide to the sides or pressure one side harder than the other. They do none of these things on their own accord. There isn't any leaving on side trails, cows head butting each other, bulls fighting, mounting etc.

All this doesn't just happen on your first attempts to drive them. They have to experience that it's profitable for them to do it as a herd. Once they do and you continue to handle them properly, they will drive well from then on.

You must build a foundation for a herd to drive well before asking for a good drive.

Start where the herd shows you they need to be started. Don't force the herd to come together. It might be that you have to start and keep the herd only loosely bunched together and just drift graze along when first teaching them to be a herd and to drive. I don't like stock thinking that drifting is all they ever have to do, so do this only until they are comfortable with moving this way. Then start asking them to come together more and move along.



Excellent example of starting a drive with all riders in line perpendicular to the direction they want to go.

It is harder to get and keep good movement in a loosely spaced herd because you have to pressure too far along behind due to the width of the back of any decent sized herd. Also, the animals aren't close enough to attract the movement of others. Once they come together better, ask for more pace, then less pace, then for a turn, a stop, and then eventually to stay. Build up to these things so you have a herd that is highly controllable when driven.

Persistence is the key to staying together and getting animals to experience that leaving the herd, bulling, stopping, etc., isn't profitable. Forcing, scaring, or rushing them back in to the herd doesn't solve the cause of these problems. Quietly persist with working animals that are moving too slow, going too fast, or otherwise not single-minded on what you're asking.

- You must have good movement to keep a herd going so have the lead cattle moving well. Keep in mind that with some herds, like those with lots of first calf heifers or cows with small calves, may need to be moved more slowly. You may have to deal with a loosely spaced herd at first and just drift them along until they get calm enough to stay together.
- Use the movement of the ones going well to attract others to follow. Concentrate on getting some of them moving with good movement but at a comfortable pace for them. Then just encourage others to go.
- When animals slow, switch to techniques that encourage a better walk like applying direct pressure to the sides of individual animals from a position at the rear or side of the herd. Make sure your angle of approach leads the animal correctly so it looks like you will run into it if you keep going.
- When you direct pressure animals that are going too slow, take a fairly quick pace and pressure like you mean it.
- A herd goes best when they are lined out following the leaders. These are the key animals to start and turn. Pressure so the lead animals will be drawing others.

Before heading out on the range

- Keep pressuring individuals just before they slow or stop when you want them to go at a good walk. Catch them as the idea forms.
- Pay attention to herd speed. Don't snooze and let them slow before you want them to.
- Work as close to the stock as you can.
- Make sure stock are mothered-up. If they aren't, give them a chance to re-mother up and start the drive again when they are. Correct what is causing them to become unpaired.
- Get off the horse and pressure them on foot if you need more control.
- If you're working on foot, sometimes getting on a horse will help speed up learning.
- If your stock are tired or unmothered, let them stop to rest and remother. Well-handled stock will stick around until you're ready to move on.
- Don't train your herd to drive if they are hungry or thirsty or during real hot or nasty weather. These distractions make it harder to do and will take longer.

If you continue working a herd well, they will get comfortable with your requests to move, keep moving, and stay together while moving. Sometimes it may seem like it isn't working, but all of a sudden the entire herd will get the idea and move out really well.

If the herd is slow in going and you think your technique is right, keep pressuring this way until they get the idea that plodding along will produce continued (quiet and persistent) pressure. Once they go, reward them by relaxing yourself.

Turning

The idea of getting good turns is to get smooth turns, with no bumping or crowding and without losing the momentum of the drive. Like with horses or driving a truck, anytime you ask animals to turn you have to give them more gas to keep going the same speed.

- When the herd is driving well, you have the movement you need to start getting good directional control.
- Make sure the herd is moving well together. If not, it will be hard to get good control over direction because you'll be fighting the ones that stall out or take off.

Turning a herd

You have roughly three choices in how to turn a herd. Sometimes the terrain or the herd size or shape limits your choices.

The first way is go up to the front of the herd and turn the lead cow either by pressuring her neck or hip.

This can be a very accurate way of turning lead stock precisely where you want to turn such as at road or trail crossings or through a gate opening into a new paddock.

The second way is to turn the lead cow by moving straight out wide to the right or left. The lead will turn, and the rest will follow. The rider does this from behind the herd.

The third way is to turn the whole herd from the back by working one side more. Do this by shifting over to the side you want to turn and speeding it up. This is the general way I turn herds on the range, but it is a little less accurate way with a big herd when the lead cows may be quite far ahead. This can make it difficult to get the lead cow to turn at precisely the right spot.

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Riders starting to shift positions.



Letting the herd decide to turn.



Turn completed, riders oriented properly.

Turning techniques for a herd

Go to the front of the herd and pressure the neck or hips to turn lead animals. Go up the side of the herd (outside the flight zone, of course) and get ahead of the lead cows or along with them. Then turn and pressure their necks.

If you are on the right side and want them to turn to the left, pressure the neck of the lead animal until she turns left. Animals coming up behind will have a desire to follow her and also to stop and look at you. This will clog things up if you don't go back and forth in short straight lines at an angle. You may have to keep pretty busy doing it this way, but sometimes terrain limits you getting to the inside of the turn.

I prefer to turn animals to the left by being on the left. From this position I can thread a herd precisely up a trail or across a narrow bridge, because I can control both speed and direction the best.

For a left turn, this means I will pressure the left hip of the lead cow until she turns her head left and just the amount I want. I get the turn first and then speed it up. I can step back after she turns and speeds up and pressure the one behind to do the same. I can do this to all the animals coming up behind her from essentially one spot. They should follow her direction and I can speed them up as needed to keep up the movement I need to keep the others coming.

Before heading up to the lead to turn a herd, make sure you have them walking at a good pace first. All the movement could die out if the herd is plodding along.

Before heading out on the range

Stay near the back of the herd but go out wider to the side. If you are driving stock and want a herd to turn to the left, you can move straight out to the right—as far out as needed—until the lead cows turn to the left. When they turn the right amount, go back to your left and drive them through the turn, usually pressuring the right side more than the left. Go back out wide as you need more turn and come back in across as you need more movement.

I use this technique a lot when working smaller herds alone, because I can get back quick enough to keep the movement going. The lead cows have to be able to see me for this to work.

If one or two animals on the drive start wandering away a bit on another path, you can go out straight and wide to the side and they should go back in readily.

If the cattle have turned in the direction you want, quit asking and get out of the flight zone, which is their reward for turning.

Turning requires you to constantly watch the lead animals and adjust to get the right turn and keep them from overturning. You also have to watch the main herd to see that movement doesn't die out and that you aren't crowding or jamming them.

Speed up one side more than the other from a position behind the herd to make smooth turns. A great way to get real smooth turns is to drive one side of the herd faster than the other.

Like the wheels of a car when turning, one side must move faster than the other, because it has to move farther.

To start a turn to the left, shift from going back and forth across the bulk of the back end to working the right side more. Done properly and with good timing, the left side will slow, the middle will keep going, and the right side will speed up, creating a nice smooth turn.

Remember that when turning a herd, it takes more “go forward” pressure to keep a herd moving and turn than to just keep it moving. Keep busy watching and adjust. Firm up if you need to.

This technique isn't a whole lot different from the previous one. Sometimes it requires you to use various combinations of techniques. Go out far to the right or stay in closer, move that side faster and vary your position and movements as you see the effects on the cattle.

Working a herd with more than one handler
When driving a herd from the back with more than one rider, make sure that all riders are **in a straight line** and oriented **perpendicular** to the direction you want the stock to go or keep going.

When turning a herd to the right, slow the animals on the right or inside and speed up the outside animals. To do this requires changing the orientation of the line to become perpendicular to the direction you want the herd to go. This means handlers on one side will slow up or drop back, if needed, for a sharper turn to encourage one side of the herd to slow, while handlers on the other side pressure more to get that side to speed up or keep going. Only the people closest to the stock should be the ones applying pressure.

Here's an example. If you want to turn a herd to the right and you have three riders:

- The rider on the right slows or stops pressuring that side or backs off altogether, depending on the speed and the sharpness of the turn you want.
- The rider on the left pressures more and moves himself up and the stock moves ahead faster.
- The rider in the middle keeps himself in line between the other two and pressures only as needed to keep some movement in the middle section of the herd.

When you practice this a few times, you can create a nice smooth turn without crowding, bumping, or losing movement with the herd.

Any rider out of line, especially on either of the ends, could cause a herd to veer or skip off and bulges to occur. Livestock, being single minded, can key in on one person out of line and go away from him. You could find this very difficult to correct unless that person gets back in line. Keep all riders working together this way, or you could have no end of problems.

Stopping for placing the herd

Drifting stock in

Drive stock to the nearest water and let them drink before placing them in the grazing area.

Let your stock drift graze into the grazing area and space themselves out a little so they will have plenty of feed where they will be staying.

When they are nearing where you want them, encourage movement to die within the herd. Back off pressure and stay behind the herd and watch for them to slow. Before they stop, go to straight lines back and forth behind to keep them drifting in to where you want them. When they get there, back off all pressure and let them stop.

Some cows might keep moving so pressure any that are still drifting by going up their sides or getting ahead of them. When they stop drifting or walking, relieve all pressure.

Get back away from them and take a look to see if you have all the movement out of them. If you don't, tend to it right away. Sometimes this means packing up and going for a drive until they stop thinking that moving is what they should do.

Spreading them out

A herd needs to be spread out so it has enough feed for the time you want them there. Usually I go up the sides to stop the lead animals. With a smaller herd, they are lined out and spread out a ways like soldiers for an inspection.

So after I stop them, I go back towards the middle of the string and ask them to go perpendicular to the way they are facing. This means drifting animals to the right or left (or both) to get them spaced. Ride straight lines, back and forth, perpendicular to the direction you want them to turn. Just encourage a drift straight out, not good movement, or you will get a drive started again. Sometimes you'll need to wade into the herd and move individuals and bunches farther out after doing this.

Sometimes the herd will drift in just about right, and all you have to do take the last bit of movement out of a few at the lead.

Before heading out on the range

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Andrew Doust — Australia, slowing a herd for placing.

Placing and settling the herd

As the last step, get a good number of animals to face different directions. This helps get their minds off moving and also helps prevent movement from some that are grazing into attracting others to follow.

If a herd drifted in and stopped well spaced out, gently turn a number of animals in the front toward the back. Cattle like to graze roughly in the direction they are facing if they are calm. Turn them by going back and forth in front of them or by pressuring at the head or hip to turn them into different directions. Animals facing different directions are less likely to get significant movement started.

Relieve all pressure when cattle are calm and facing different directions. Stand back and observe the herd carefully at this point to see if you missed any animals that are still uncomfortable with you around or are still stressed about being in a herd. Stand well back from the herd. You can move cattle by just standing still long enough, even from much farther away than you think.

Let them settle a bit. Many may go ahead and bed down; some will go to grazing. If you see any that get high-headed and bug-eyed as you walk around the herd, work them until they get comfortable enough to stay.

Sometimes shortly after letting them stop, a few may just pack up and leave and not look back. If any do this, go with them and work them until they get comfortable with your pressure and you.

It's okay to take a few others along with an animal that is quitting the bunch (usually some others will follow when it goes). Working these stock could mean letting them go ahead, whatever direction they want to go. Just follow behind and at a pace slower than they are going.

When they slow down and start to relax, pressure them from the side. They should go straight ahead. If not, practice until they do or go back to straight lines behind them or zigzagging until they are comfortable, and then direct pressure into their sides. When you get a straight-ahead response, ask for straight-ahead and good movement.

Walk up their sides in the direction they are going and see if they will slow or stop. When they do this well, check to see if they will turn by going out wider to the side. They should turn calmly and away from your pressure. Watch for a calm, relaxed, and responsive attitude. If you don't see this, keep working them until you do.

When they do all these things well, drift or drive them back into the herd. Drift them only when bringing them into the herd. This should put an end to them wanting to leave the group.

When animals have been through these lessons, they will usually head back to the herd on their own. If they don't, drift them all the way back in

when they are ready. When they get back to the herd, they should relax and perhaps bed down or graze. Get back away from the herd to facilitate this.

Cattle have a very strong association with the place they experience comfortable results. The last request you gave them, which was stop and relax, comes with the big reward of relief from all pressure.

I'm confident that a herd is ready to stay together and where I put them when I see a calm attitude appear in all the animals. They respond consistently well to all the things that I ask them to do and show they are quite content with where they are.

So with good handling, cattle will stay in the place you leave them. Cattle have learned its profitable to move straight away, move out well, move and stay with the herd, keep moving, speed up, slow down, change direction, stop, relax and stay. All of this was accomplished with proper pressure, consistent releases, complete attention on proper handling, and taking the desire to move out of them.

Well-handled stock will stay for a day or two when all movement is gone from the herd.

Points for review

Don't revert to force when you get in a tight spot, such as when cattle take off or won't go up a hill. Think a second about what caused it (you, for example) and how you can help them do it. Then set it up right so you can let it happen.

And relax. Any stock you work in the United States are surrounded on three sides by water. Customs will let you know if they get too far north.

It is critical that you approach training your stock with confidence, patience, and some knowledge of these principles and techniques. Stock will allow you exceptional control in an amazingly short amount of time if you will learn and apply these things. Believe this before you start.

Some animals may be very sensitive to pressure and require more time. Handling these animals will be no different in principle than the calmer ones. Your approach will require more sensitivity and may take a little more time. You may also have to take things back to a more basic level. If you have some real wild ones and don't currently have the expertise to get them better, you may want to keep them out of the main herd if it's scheduled for turnout on the range.

To do this well isn't easy—but it isn't hard either. It takes some time to get the feel of this and allow the stock to respond, but you are training them for a lifetime. They don't forget good handling or positive results they gain for themselves.

It can take more time to correct a specific problem with good stockmanship, because it requires addressing the root cause. But once it's corrected, you won't have to deal with the same problem again tomorrow.

If you're handling stock to go through a gate, for instance, it may take longer to get them through the first time with good techniques. But once they go through well, you won't have trouble at the gate again. With conventional handling, there is no certainty they will always go through.

Abandon the idea of scaring stock to go where you want them. If stock see you as a predator or aggressive (and they will if you **think** that way), you lose control.

Before heading out on the range

Believe there is a calm, responsive animal inside of every one you own, no matter what happens at first. Know they will do all the things I have said and even more.

First set a goal for the way you want your stock to handle for you—otherwise any road will get you there. That goal should include becoming a good boss for the herd and developing animals that are comfortable and responsive to everything you ask them to do, wherever you ask them to do it.

Approach your animals carefully by edging closer and closer and watching to see where they are mentally and emotionally. Think about walking straight lines, flat back and forth. If they seem quiet, maybe a zigzag type approach is appropriate.

Watch them. If a head goes up, that shows apprehension that shouldn't be ignored. Do they just take off and run when you get near? If so, then they likely believe you are aggressive.

Can you get close enough to be able to pressure them effectively? Are they so calm that they won't move away from correct pressure? Will they move off well from basic pressure but split up when you go wider out to the side or perhaps keep going too much?

Do some want to leave the bunch and hide?

Use your initial assessment of how cattle perceive you to determine where to start training.

Start training where the stock have told you that you need to. Remember the most basic starting place is to let the animals find that it's okay for you to be around. Just be around the stock without asking for anything. The next steps might include letting them find out that you aren't going to force them, that pressure has a release, and that you won't do things that bother them.

If they have already taken off, go slower than they are and follow directly behind. This will help them want to see you so they are likely to slow and stop, giving you a chance to reward that step in the right direction. Stop when they stop and let them relax. After they relax a bit, approach and then retreat until you can get as close as you feel is workable.

When they are better about not taking off and more comfortable with you around, move back and forth a little or move your horse's head a bit to get them to go.

If the stock are comfortable with pressure and move off straight ahead with good movement, then see how they are with turning, how they speed up, slow, stop, and go through gates. Practice doing these things so you can be assured they trust your handling enough to do anything you need.

You will likely have some stock that are really concerned about you, and some that aren't. Handle the sensitive ones first so they are calmer before taking the herd out together. This avoids problems with working a whole herd.

If stock don't do something well like go through a gate or turn, the problem usually lies within one of two things. Either you are in the wrong position, or they still don't take pressure well enough. They are likely unsure about your handling and what they can do to relieve pressure, or they still see you as aggressive.

The answer here is to go back to practicing basic pressure and release, using good techniques with things you know they already do okay. Then build from there and practice more difficult moves.

If you think your technique is causing problems, correct it. Get some help if you need to. Have someone videotape your handling and watch it carefully. It's a great way to see what you did and how it affected things.

Assuming your technique is right, any problem in handling has either an emotional, mental or physical basis. When you have problems, determine which it is.

Emotional problems can only be corrected by addressing the performance of the animal. Go back to working the stock to do things they can do, and these problems will go away.

If stock don't do what you are asking but are comfortable with your handling, you are asking wrong.

Start any lesson at the level they are at. The stock will tell you where to start, how fast to progress, and how it's working.

Different techniques are more effective in different situations. If what you're doing isn't working, change your techniques or even components of techniques.

Check your attitude (perhaps you need a bit more patience or should quit for the day) or go back to a place where you can get control and build from there.

Moving stock into a corral or pasture

Stock entering a corral or gate are usually being driven from behind. This is fine, but you need to focus on keeping good movement and pay attention to good directional control.

Make sure to watch how much pressure is applied as the stock start through. Stock feel more pressure when confined by a gate or bridge than by just being driven, so watch carefully and back off or add pressure as needed.

Follow the movement through the gate by going back and forth (on the same path) as you need to.

Don't chase or force the movement, or stock will get stressed and break back. Well-handled stock will follow movement into a corral if you don't pressure them too much to rush through.

Summary hints

Calves breaking back

Young calves can get disoriented to the herd rather easily if they are spun around by a handler mistake, especially if they are being moved unmothered to the cow.

If a calf breaks back on a drive and runs for the last place it thinks it was with mama, you may have to run and get ahead of it. But cross directly in front of it to stop it when you get a ways ahead without forcing it too much to stop. Work back and forth when it stops and relaxes a bit to get it to go back to the herd.

If one just hops back away, it is often best not to chase it immediately. Stop applying any pressure and give it room to come back by getting away. Often it will come right back in when it hears the herd. Correct what you did to cause this to happen.

Always watch the stock and let them tell you where you need to be.

Always walk in straight lines when near the stock. Don't curve around them, especially up the sides of a herd. You can change direction but proceed in as straight a line as possible. This helps stock know where you are going.

When you approach a herd with an unknown flight zone, approach them at an angle, never head on.

Before heading out on the range

Don't be afraid to make mistakes, but correct them quickly and learn from them. You're doing better if the stock are calmer and easier to handle after the session than before. Practicing with the stock improves your handling.

Vary your techniques to fit the situation.

You'll find that some of these techniques provoke a more or less dramatic response with animals of average disposition:

- Straight lines behind are generally less likely to really get them to move out and more likely to encourage a drift.
- Direct pressure into their sides will generally get them to move right out, especially if you look straight at them and march right in.
- Going against the direction of movement along the sides really speeds them up.
- Going with the direction of movement slows them down or can even stop them if you keep going past them.

With most of these techniques, the degree of training, mood of the herd, time of day, timing and speed of your movements, posture and attitude also control the degree of reaction from the stock.

Make adjustments in the techniques you use and how you use them all the time as you discover you need to. Make everything fit the animals and the response you want. Change the response you want if the stock show you they aren't ready to do what you intended.

Always use a position that places you closest to the spot where you can control speed and direction. In some cases you want to be up at the front of a herd when crossing a bridge, river, a tough gate or going up or down a steep hill. There, you can direct speed by going with them to slow the lead, speed them up by going down the sides, direct pressure to get them going or to speed up.

You control direction by being able to pressure them in the place where they can see you and where you want them to go. You can also pressure a hip or a head to turn them without moving yourself out of position much. You can guide a whole herd from one spot this way.

Above all, watch the animals. No one can predict ahead of time what is just right for every situation as you go into it. Develop a feel for what fits. This requires constant watching, thinking, and sensitivity to all the animals. This isn't an easy task with a large herd, especially when this is all new to you. Practice, watch, and adapt and the herd will get better and better.

Remember to work close to your animals when pressuring them. Being too much directly behind them or too far away behind them really bugs stock, because they wonder what you're confused about and what you're signaling them to do. If you are too far back and directly behind or too far away, they will often turn and slow or stop to look at you. Make it easy for them to see you, and let them know exactly what you want them to do.

Be specific in your requests. If you want them to turn 20 degrees right, for instance, don't settle for 10 or cause them to overturn. If you want them to move out at a good walk, don't settle for them plodding along. Focus all your attention on getting exactly what you want and be consistent and correct in how you ask and when you release.

Release them when they get it just right. Persist quietly in asking until they sense you won't quit until they give you a response. They are sensitive enough to respond to even subtle cues. It's much easier on animals—horse, cow, or dog—to know exactly what you want than for them to get it almost right and have you keep correcting them.

If you really don't want anything, get out of the flight zone so they know that.

Get good movement when driving them somewhere distant or going through a tough place such as up a steep grade or across a river. Get good movement from them and keep it going. Well-handled cattle can take a great deal of pressure when it is applied correctly, so don't be too timid.

Concentrate on anticipating livestock moves and try to get ahead of the situation instead of rushing to catch up and correct your position. Watch them closely. Think a step ahead and react quickly.

Don't allow stock to relieve pressure by escaping or running away, or they might get the idea that this is the thing to do. Help them understand that running off isn't the way to get relief from pressure by going with them if they do this. Prevent it in the first place, if possible, by not pressuring too much.

If you make a mistake sorting through a gate or emptying a corral, it's usually better to let one get away than to stress it by forcing a turn or stop.

Some situations such as branding or dehorning will stress stock, but proper handling makes these situations much less traumatic.

Stock will learn that pressure has a release and it only comes in so close to them. It doesn't keep coming no matter what they do. They learn to

“take pressure.” This is another reason pressure/release handling and good timing are so important.

When stock get comfortable with pressure and understand it, they learn confinement from corral fences, chutes, headgates, trailers, and other cattle close to them is nothing to panic about. They can take this kind of pressure.

Practice in difficult places

There are many situations where you will have to adapt techniques to tough terrain or constraints. For instance, where you can't run straight lines behind and have to work from the sides. There may be some places where you can't do either.

By remembering the principles and various tools of handling, you can almost always adapt and apply various techniques to many different situations. Learn and practice these techniques so you can make them work well for you in any setting.

If you “backslide” and stress stock by forcing something, they will get harder to control. Stress them repeatedly and seriously enough, and it will take longer to get them calm and responsive again than it did in the first place.

Always position yourself so the livestock can see you when you move them. When moving either an individual animal or a herd, there is a spot where you can get movement and direction and stay within sight of the animal or the whole herd when pressuring them. They need to know where you are, and you need to be where they can see you and the direction you want them to go.

Handling stock well requires constant monitoring of stock movements and responses, adoption of varying handler positions, timing your movements and using different techniques.

Before heading out on the range

Training stock to follow a lead handler

One of the most effective techniques for keeping a herd going in the right direction calmly is having a rider lead them. This might require a little training before they will do it, but is well worth it, especially on some of the tougher range or big pasture moves and gathers.

Cattle really like to follow something. Notice the lead cows on a move in a new area and you'll see them working to figure which way to go. Leading them relieves them of this. All they have to do is keep up the pace.

I use dogs or other riders bringing up the rear with myself at the front. If the stock are headed out on the march in the right direction, then you only need someone to lead. If you're leading, make sure you aren't slowing or splitting some off to either side of you. Keep the right distance ahead.

Leading can provide an excellent way of controlling direction, especially with big herds. It's a handy technique in steep terrain where you might have a tough time getting out wider to the sides or up to the front without messing up movement of the herd to make a turn. Mountain terrain and well-handled stock will tend to line out a herd so only a lead rider can make this work. Stock must be comfortable with you leading.

Training stock so they will follow well is fairly simple to do. Before working them to follow a lead, it's assumed you will have handled them so they respond well to basic pressure and handling. They should drive and turn well. Make sure you can work the herd from the sides also.

To begin working them to lead, have another person or a good dog drive the stock toward a lead handler. Doing this someplace they know the route to helps but isn't essential. Just have a person out in front and another drive the stock to them.

It's important for the lead handler to stay well enough out in front to avoid slowing, turning or splitting the herd, but not so far ahead that you aren't drawing them, so the lead person has to watch the stock all the time.

At first, most stock won't be comfortable with a lead handler but they will get comfortable within an hour or two. Some herds will take longer depending on how they are used to being handled.

Cattle that have been called are usually more comfortable following a person. Remember that a handler leading them can slow stock, so be careful not to do that.

I take the stock on a straight drive for a while and concentrate on staying ahead of them. If they turn on their own, I move over to stay in front of them if I have to. When I see they are comfortable with this, I turn a little to check and see if they will follow. If they don't, the person or dog driving can work the opposite side to help the stock to follow the turn. Practice turns like this until they follow the turn well and want to follow on their own.

It is important that the handler driving not pressure them to turn if they are turning on their own. They adjust so they are in position to encourage them to keep moving. Cattle are rewarded for following this way. Once stock are leading well, all the lead rider needs to do is show the way and be conscious of not slowing or turning the movement.

Although stock can be trained to follow a leader (or be called), there will be times just a handler moving to the lead or calling them isn't enough incentive to get them to follow, especially if they really don't feel like going. Sometimes they run to a call and leave their calves. If this happens, return to driving them or get help from a dog or person to help drive them to you.

Good dogs are a great help in training a herd to follow and move.

Another method I've used to get stock comfortable with following me is to drive a herd for a ways until they have the idea to keep going. I do this in a big field. I go up the side and cut in behind about five or six animals in the lead and drive them on in the same direction the whole herd is going. The herd behind may slow or stop. While I'm driving these away, the rest will be looking at this and will sometimes just follow me and the five or six going away. If they don't, I have someone drive them from behind to encourage them to follow. I end up in the middle, and pretty soon they are following me. They get used to this idea soon.

Up and downhill or crossings

It is not uncommon for stock to stall when crossing a river or when going up or down steep inclines. Sometimes stock are being herded off riparian areas into the uplands, and they just don't want to line out and go up.

It is important that you keep your temper in these cases. It's important that stock remain real comfortable with your handling or you won't get them to stay and you'll be doing this again.

Realize the stock aren't doing this to aggravate you. They are either comfortable with your handling and just feel the way is closed to them or can't take the pressure of steep inclines or crossings and your handling pressure at the same time. Determine which it is.

If they aren't comfortable enough with your handling, then stop trying to get them up and practice pressure/release until they are. Take them someplace else and practice. They should all be good at pressure into their sides and going by you. They should also drive well. If they feel the way you want them to go is closed, be careful not to increase the heat on them. You have some options to get them there. Help them do it.

I don't just keep raising the pressure or even continue with moderate pressure for very long if they don't look like they will go. I may try getting them to go by riding lines behind. If that isn't getting good movement, then I zigzag or use direct pressure. I never allow a herd to not go the way I want (not a well handled bunch, anyway) but will change techniques to help them.

I work a stalled herd more from the middle and pressure the ones on the sides of me as I move the lead up. This gets the front to drive on and creates movement following behind it. If they still don't go, stop pressuring from behind **before** you end up crowding the back into the middle. Look at the situation and try to create an opportunity to help them in these cases.

To help them go ahead, quit driving them from the back end and go up to the front to direct pressure one or two leaders. At the front, you can control speed and direction better. As the front moves up, it helps to create an opening for the back to go, attracts them to go with the ones in front, and avoids crowding and jamming.

Shoving the back harder into the middle just creates more stress within the herd. They can't move ahead, because it is jammed with cows. Crowding and bumping creates real stress. Avoid creating this, or you will end up with a wreck.

If a rider goes up to the front and works the lead animals, riders in the rear should back off pressure a bit so the stock don't feel too trapped, especially at a place like a creek crossing. The person in the front should pressure the lead animals (ones facing the right direction across) into their sides. This will help clear the front and attract others to follow the movement.

Before heading out on the range

If you don't have a few facing the direction you want, then get farther up front and pressure a bit until some of them are looking at you. Then you can pressure directly into their sides and ask them to go ahead. Settle for just a step forward or a look in the right direction and release pressure if it's real hard for them to go. Stay in the same spot and go in and out in a smooth rhythm and keep asking them to make progress toward crossing. Stock will gauge the rhythm and move on by.

Too much pressure will tend to cause some stock to break back, so be attentive to how much pressure you can apply. Once some stock go on, others should follow with some light to moderate pressure applied by riders in the back.

When working alone, I've also been able to get stock across particularly difficult places when I couldn't work from the front by driving a few of the animals all or part of the way to where I wanted them to go.

I look for and pick the animals that were more inclined to go than the rest and worked them to go on. I also do this if I can't get the front animals to go and keep going—say they go 10 feet and stop, go 5 feet and stop like they sometimes do on a hot day going up or down a steep hill. I leave the rest to stay put and bring and place these bolder animals with more movement where I want them. I then go back and either drive the rest to them from the back or the front. I work from the front if I can, especially at difficult places.

If I'm driving a sizable herd and know I'm coming to a difficult place, I'll start picking up the pace before coming to the spot. I get them moving at a good walk and keep them going this way. By the time they get to the tough place, ones in the lead may slow and balk, but they will go because of the momentum of the herd. They have hundreds or perhaps a thousand coming behind them.

Use the movement of the herd to help keep them going in tough places but don't stress them by running them to get across.

One other valuable technique for getting a herd to go uphill or move is to have one or two riders go up the sides (outside the flight zone) and come back (inside the flight zone) against the direction they are going. One rider can go down the sides or two riders can go down the sides together on opposite sides. A good walk or a slow trot works well to speed them up in this case, but vary the pace depending on how the stock react.

This method can really speed the stock up so be careful not to overdo it. It works best to get animals speeded up when they are already walking, rather than already stopped, but it does work either way.

If the stock are stopped, I try to get them started again by direct pressure into their sides or walking against the direction they are facing. Be careful not to peel off animals as you go trotting by. Sometimes a head will turn to see you. Remember to go wider to the sides when you are returning to the front part of the herd. Get out of the flight zone on your way back up, or you'll slow the herd down more.



Notice the lead cows slow and stop when through the gate. Look for this to happen.

Going through gates

You can practice with animals taking pressure while distractions are going on to test their level of trust and understanding. I like to practice with stock going through gates.

When I think they are responding okay to different pressure cues, I'll take them through.

Maybe the first time, only the back part will go through quietly and the front veer will away. I will take the ones that went through out again with the whole herd and practice driving (going straight) and getting them more comfortable with going by me.

We try again. The next time most of them go through, but some hesitate, which isn't good enough. I want them **all** to go through the gate and slow or stop as they get in the corral.

So I take them around again. Next time they all go in.

Then I ask a few people to sit on the fence by the gate. I take the herd out the gate and around the field and drive them close by the fence to see how comfortable they are going by the people.

Some scamper by the first pass. We go around the field practicing again, and I take them close by the people again. They are better, but a few still aren't entirely comfortable, so we do it until they are. Then I take them through the gate, and they go through calmly and quietly. Lesson done.

The herd has learned to respond to my go-ahead pressure even under elevated or more distracting circumstances. If they hadn't, I would continue repeating the lesson as much as I needed to.

Taking all your animals through this type of training and practicing all the things you will need them to do will result in a remarkably manageable herd.

I like to put a person right in the gate with the gate mostly closed so the stock have to go within three feet or so from the person. There was a time on the ranch that a person would get chewed out for "blocking" the gate like this, and with the old way of thinking and working, rightfully so. But the stock should focus on the handler putting them through, not the potential distraction. They will do this. Try it. It helps make them real easy to sort at the gate when you have to.

The more practice and the better stock get at things like this, the better they will be at learning and doing other things, so time spent here is well worth it.

It takes some practice to get some stock to all go through a gate well. Even though they all go through, I'm not finished working with them until they slow after they are through the gate and go to grazing (if there's grass) just past the gate. If there isn't any grass, they slow and stop just through the gate unless I pressure them all the way through.

Before heading out on the range

A goal for going through a gate lesson could be “I would like to see them with their heads down and grazing after they go through a gate “every time.” I want them that comfortable.

If I load stock into a trailer, I want them to go in well. But I also practice that until they just stand in the trailer, with the gate open. Of course everyone may have a little different idea on what is okay for him or her. You might just need this degree of comfort on the range. Set your sights on remarkable control and calm stock.

Setting a standard for how well stock do things applies also to going up steep hills, across water, and many other things.

Even though stock may respond calmly and responsively to pressure in average situations after initial training, that doesn't necessarily mean they will when they are excited, tired and hot, bedded on a cold day, or have to go by people standing by the gate.

Just because the stock seem calm with you working them horseback doesn't mean they will be okay when you are on foot or when the dogs work them. Sometimes they don't want to slow if they are trying to get someplace.

We need to train our stock for these situations. We need them to respond well to us even when they are distracted or just don't feel like it.

Make sure the stock are well trained to the basics and then train them on horseback, on foot, or with dogs.

Don't give up or get discouraged by these situations if they act up when it's new. Increase your efforts and continue to ask them for the desired responses.

Once the stock are coming along, you can also practice getting them good at responding well in all situations by working them when they are in a higher level of excitement or potential distraction.

If stock are in a situation that makes it hard to listen when training, move them to a place where they can. Try to replace what they are doing with something you want them to do. This is an important training tool.

Don't try to stop them from doing what they are doing, such as running off or not moving well. Change it by letting them know it's not getting them anywhere, and then ask them to do something that you want them to do.

In order to achieve ever-increasing control over stock, work on improving your attitude about allowing things to happen.