

BUD WILLIAMS STOCKMANSHIP SCHOOL NOTES



Bud Williams

In order for you to be able to work animals the way I do, you must change your basic attitude about livestock. This will probably be the most difficult thing I will ask you to do.

Old: I'm going to **MAKE** that animal do what I want.

New: I'm going to LET that animal do what I want.

Old: That miserable (ornery, wild, stupid, hateful, ...)

cow (calf, bull, sheep, pig, goat, horse, ...)

broke back, (went the wrong way, missed the gate, charged me, got sick, died, ...)

New: What did I do to cause that animal to react that way?

People who are familiar with my methods of working livestock know my number one aim is to work my animals with the least amount of stress possible. In fact, I have found ways to work livestock that actually takes existing stress off them. It is just a bonus to me that I can also get the job done faster and with less cost than conventional methods.

I am amazed at the control we can have over animals. Twenty years ago, I was considered pretty good at handling problem livestock. Knowing what I do today, I wonder how I even held down a job. To me, the exciting thing is knowing that I have only scratched the surface. I am learning and improving every day. You can too.

Control:

In trying to control animals in the old way, you are giving up any chance of getting the kind of control I am talking about. Forget all of your excuses: She is afraid of the gate. She remembers getting hurt in the chute. She has never been in the chute before. etc., etc., etc.,

BELIEVE that she is responding to what YOU are doing RIGHT NOW

The method of working cattle that is used today was developed in the Southwest over 100 years ago. It required rough, tough people just to survive under the conditions that existed. They developed a system that suited their temperament with no thought of the animals. Because of the turmoil and commotion that existed with this system, the sensitive people left the livestock industry. Therefore, this system has perpetuated itself. In fact, it is considered sacred.

Two factors are being felt at this time that is causing people to show a great deal of interest in my method of stockmanship.

1. Animal welfare: People are becoming more concerned about the humane treatment of animals.

2. Economics: It is a proven fact that stressed animals do not perform as well as unstressed ones. The methods I use reduce stress in both the animals and in the people working them.

I would like to talk to you about some of the things I have learned about handling livestock. The methods I use have proven themselves with reindeer, elk, fallow deer, horses, hogs, sheep and goats, as well as with cattle. While my method of stockmanship is quite simple, it is very difficult for people to learn because it often goes against HUMAN behavior. Remember as a stockman, you are supposed to be the smart one, and it is up to you to change to accommodate the animal.

I have had the good fortune to observe people working animals in Northern Alaska and Canada, Central America and from the west coast to Kentucky in the east. Everyone used the same basic principle to work animals. That is to go out and chase them from where the animals were to where the people wanted them to go. By now you probably realize that I don't think that is the best way to work animals. The traditional method of driving animals consists of trying to frighten the animal away from the person, hopefully in the direction the person wants it to go. Using **FEAR and FORCE** to move animals is very stressful to them. **My method takes the animal's natural behavior into consideration but makes us change OUR natural behavior.**

There are certain things animals want to do as long as they are in a normal mental state.

1. They want to move in the direction they are headed.
2. They want to follow other animals.
3. They want to see what is pressuring them
4. They have very little patience.

Proper position on your part and nothing more is enough pressure to allow you to move animals any place they are physically able to go. By your being in this position, the animals will WANT to move in the desired direction. Excessive pressure will put an animal into a panic condition where none of these things apply.

One of the most important and probably least understood things is how to use the movement of animals to help you. When a herd of animals is moving it is almost perpetual motion. The lead animal draws the back animal. As it steps up, this puts pressure on the lead animal so it keeps going. It takes so little to keep this going, but it also takes so little to stop it. When the movement stops sometimes it takes a lot to get is going again. Also, if you help it too much, it may be hard to stop.

When driving animals, the direction of the herd is important, but the direction of the individual animals within the herd is just as important. When a person is moving around the herd to different positions, they should at all times be aware of any changes of direction in the individual animals. This will tell the person if his position is right or wrong.

I use the term "pressure". As pressure is applied to move the animals, it must be released when they move, either by you stepping back, or by the fact that they moved ahead and that takes the

pressure off. Constant pressure with no let-up or excessive pressure is what panics animals. Loud noise is almost always excessive pressure. When animals try to cut back they are being pressured too much, or from the wrong spot. When you crowd the back animal too hard and there is no place for it to go, it will try to cut back. That is why the front animals should have pressure applied to them. As they move, there is room for the back animals to move into as they are pressured. The front animals should be pressured from the side. This allows the animals to move away from our pressure, which it wants, and for it to be going where we want it to. Millions of animals are worked from the back, pushed and yelled at, but this does not make it the *best way* to work animals.

Do not apply pressure from behind the animals. Now listen to what I said. "Do not APPLY PRESSURE from behind". You can walk along behind livestock all day and not cause any problem as long as you aren't pressuring them. There is always a correct position. This spot moves as the animal moves. The angle you move at in relation to the animal determines if you will maintain the proper position. The speed you move is important, but *not* as important as the angle.

The animals need to feel they have two ways to go. Your position will cause them to choose the proper one. If they feel **TRAPPED or SURROUNDED** they will panic and want to cut back. At this point, they no longer want to follow the other animals. When pressure is applied to get a certain response, be sure to relieve the pressure when you get that response by stepping back or allowing the animal to move a step or two before following.

Noise louder than normal conversation is not only stressful to the animals, but detrimental to your objective.

Work the leaders. If they are worked properly the back will follow with little or no effort. Read your animals. They will tell you what your position should be. Don't try to anticipate what the animals will do as this will put you out of position and likely cause the very thing you are trying to prevent.

Moving back and forth while getting closer to the animals will tend to cause them to move away from you.

Moving parallel to livestock in the *same* direction the animals are going will tend to slow the animals down. This is very helpful if you are trying to settle animals that have too much movement. It is very detrimental if you are driving a herd since you tend to kill any movement the people on the back end are trying to generate.

Moving parallel to livestock in the *opposite* direction (front to rear) will tend to speed them up. Remember, animals want to continue in the direction they are headed. When they see you coming, they will try to hurry past you.

Conclusion

I am not a good enough writer to be able to write a "How To" book. This paper is intended to be a reminder of what I have shown you using diagrams and videos. This will get you started.

If you have truly changed your basic attitude about livestock as I have suggested...If you will look to your animals to see if your position is right or wrong...If you will take responsibility for what the animal does...Then you will be able to continue learning on your own.