

Proper Stockmanship School

Richard McConnell & Tina Williams

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"If I only have time to either tell someone what's possible with proper stockmanship or show them how to do it, I will tell them the possibilities. They will figure out how to get it done." — Bud Williams

"I define low-stress livestock handling as 'a livestock-centered, behaviorally correct, psychologically-oriented, ethical and humane method of working livestock which is based on mutual communication and understanding.'"

— Whit Hibbard, Stockmanship Journal, Vol 1, Iss 1

"Bud Williams claims that most sickness is handler-caused, so with proper handling, livestock rarely get sick. For example, at Vee Tee Feeders, Ltd. in Canada, Williams claims to have reduced the incidence of doctoring from about 75 animals per day to two or three just by the way he handled the livestock."

— Stockmanship Journal, Vol 1, Iss 1

"It is not enough to do your best, you must know what to do and then do your best."

— W. Edwards Deming

If we only received a bill

1000 head of cattle were divided into two groups for quarantine for 3 days.

500 were sorted correctly in 15 minutes; 500 were not sorted correctly in over an hour.

The correctly sorted group gained 4 lbs/day x 3 days = 12# @ \$1/lb = \$6000.

The incorrectly sorted group didn't gain anything.

The incorrect sort cost \$6000.

"If your animals are getting sick, what about their performance? The biggest cost to either industry, dairy or beef cattle, is the performance loss. If you have animals perform like they can, the amount of income over what they do perform at is just unreal. So if you take and total the death loss and the drug cost it will not equal the performance loss. Imagine what we lose in performance if we have a lot of sick animals."

— Bud Williams

"The prevailing view now is that livestock are conscious, thinking, feeling, and willful. This realization has profound implications for how we treat and interact with our livestock."

— Whit Hibbard, Stockmanship Journal, Vol 1, Iss 2



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Richard McConnell & Tina Williams

PO Box 764 • Bolivar, Missouri 65613 • 417-327-6500

Richard@handnhandlivestocksolutions.com • www.handnhandlivestocksolutions.com

"It's what happens before what happens, happens."
— Ray Hunt

"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."
— George Bernard Shaw

Communicating with Animals

Factors affecting our communication with animals.

1. Body position in relation to animals.
2. Body language we project.
3. Our emotional state and the animal's emotional state.
4. How we apply pressure and relieve it.
5. **The animal's perception of your position is *all* that matters, not how you feel about your position in relation to the animal.**

It's probably best if you just accept that the animals you are working can read your mind!

Manage your thoughts accordingly!

Our main concerns for animal health should be emotional fitness, proper exercise, and good nutrition/water.

"I then did nothing else but go about my chores and picked one quality I liked about every cow I came in contact with while handling her or even while simply scraping stalls."
— Paul K

"The majority of cattle handling problems stem from instinctive human behaviors. Once people are aware of and in control of their counterproductive instinctive behaviors then they are ready to learn a new set of cattle handling skills that will enable them to get the job done in a calm, controlled, safe and efficient manner."
— Dylan Biggs

Adjusting Our Attitude

Old way of thinking:

I'm going to force that animal to do what I want.

New way of thinking:

I will let that animal do what I want it to.

Old way of thinking:

That stupid old #73 broke back.
She is always a problem.

New way of thinking:

What did I do to cause that to happen?

"We are heading in the wrong direction. We should be looking for behavioral solutions, not mechanical solutions"

— Bud Williams at his Stockmanship School
Ft. Keogh, MT, Sept. 2005

The universal law of stockmanship is *the animals are never wrong!*

"Animals—whether horses, buffalo, dogs, cattle or sheep – will follow only a stable leader. That leader's balance will be reflected in his consistently calm-assertive energy." — Cesar Millan, Dog Whisperer

*"The **way** we move, **how** we move, and **where** we move to are important to communicate with animals. If you move properly, the animal will respond properly. Your position is everything!"*

— Bud Williams

"Do or do not, there is no try." — Yoda

"Good judgement comes from experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgement." — Will Rogers

There is a big difference between taming livestock and teaching livestock.

- A bull can be tamed, yet be very dangerous.
- A stockdog can be tamed, yet not work livestock.
- Being "nice" to our animals does not mean anything to them.

"Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right." — Henry Ford

"Low-stress handling does not mean working livestock slow. I call this 'slow-stressful handling.'"

— Lynn Locatelli, DVM,
Stockmanship Journal, Vol 1, Iss 2

“Some people get the idea that if their animals are moving fast that it’s not good, that it’s not low stress. As Bud explains, the question is: Why are they moving fast? If they are moving fast out of fear and to get away from you then that’s not good. If they are moving fast, even running and bucking, because they are feeling good, then that’s healthy and not to be discouraged.”

— Whit Hibbard, Stockmanship Journal, Vol 1, Iss 1

Getting Their Minds Right

- We as ranchers do not have a problem purchasing a new tractor or pickup which will only depreciate in value, while we could spend 60 minutes with our stock and receive many benefits over our lifetime without any money spent.
- Training is a minimum investment of effort for a maximum return on time.
- Livestock should be trained (prepared) in the field before moving to more confined areas.
- Body language, body position, and our attitude will result in a response, either positive or negative.
- It is *imperative* we learn to read our livestock. Remember when you were learning to read, you started by learning the alphabet first.
- If we pay attention to the animals, they will tell us the exact spot we need to be to take them wherever we want.
- Many (most) of the problems you can now envision will no longer be a problem once you teach your livestock to drive. Examples: shadows, bullers, fighting bulls, mean old #176.

Signs that the “mind” of your animals isn’t “right” after the training process is complete:

- **Any** bawling. And we are also including weaning time here. If your cows or calves are bawling after weaning, they need to be driven. Just a little while of driving (perhaps a couple of times of driving over a day or two), and all the bawling is over.

- **Any** head goes “up” head goes “up” when you get close to the group (you know the look, that straight head up, ears forward, “I’m going to run if you take one more step” look).
- **Any** animals run up when they hear you arrive and act, in any way, excited (as in excited that you are taking them to new feed or putting out hay or grain). This is also usually combined with point #1, bawling.
- **Any** animals walk the fence perimeter mindlessly. Again, this is usually combined with point #1, bawling and again we are also including weaning time. They don’t need to and shouldn’t walk the fence at any time.
- **Any** animals stop, turn, and/or look back at you or “hook” rather than just move straight away when you start driving them.
- When entering their new grazing paddock, **any** animals do anything other than just put their heads down and start grazing (such as walk the fence to check out the extent of the paddock).

If any of the previous things happens with your trained/settled animals, you should immediately go through the training/settling steps with the animals again.

It might just take you a minute or it might take 15 minutes, but you need to take the time to do it to settle their minds.

“We have found that, if good temperament cattle are continually worked by handlers who understand low stress management, the result is a herd of cattle with an increased response to vaccinations, reduced injuries and diseases during handling and transport, better gains, higher pregnancy rates, all with fewer input requirements in shorter time.”

“During the weaning it is critical to capture the minds of the calves and show them the handler as the source of their relief.”

“The only disability in life is a bad attitude.”

— Scott Hamilton

“The problem is not the problem; the problem is your attitude about the problem. Do you understand?”

— Captain Jack Sparrow

Stockmanship is . . .

. . . an overlooked dimension of management; another addition to our knowledge toolbox.

Our job is to create a situation where we have less stress on our animals.

To do this, we must learn to work our animals better under the conditions they are in.

We must recognize what the livestock need and do it.

Don't be disappointed if people refuse to help you. Remember the words of Einstein, "I'm thankful to all those who said 'No,' because of them I did it myself."

Additional Notes and Tidbits—

"When I mention 'performance,' I am referring to animal performance, including indices of weight gain, conception rates, milk yield, immune function, and carcass quality. Numerous scientific studies [some references following] have illustrated that those indices are positively correlated with good handling practices and negatively correlated with coercive handling practices."

— Whit Hibbard, *Stockmanship Journal*, Vol 1, Iss 2

"Calves subjected to weaning stressors who find relief and undergo acclimation treatment (exposed to plenty of low stress handling in various real-life situations) are less subject to harmful increases in stress hormones [cortisol]. It has been shown that heifers weaned using this methodology reach puberty sooner and have an increased likelihood of becoming pregnant."

— Robert Taylor, B.S., DVM, DIP.ACVS, Working Ranch, Nov-Dec 2013, "Low Stress – No Mess"

"In a study of cattle temperament and acclimated vs. non-acclimated heifers, acclimated heifers had cortisol levels 40% lower than the non-acclimated group, and 65% of the acclimated heifers reached puberty at 12 months as compared to 39% of non-acclimated heifers. In addition, 50% of acclimated heifers were pregnant 30 days into the breeding season as compared to 32% of non-acclimated heifers."

— R.F. Cooke, et al, 2009, *Journal of Animal Science*, quoted in Working Ranch, Nov-Dec 2013, "Low Stress – No Mess"

"Animal contact is often ranked as the first or second leading cause of injuries on the farm" (Langley & Morrow, 2010, p. 226).

An Australian study of 12 one-man operated sow herds found that stock handling was responsible for a difference of 26% in total births per sow per year (Hemsworth et al., 1981).

For more information:

- Visit our website at: handnhandlivestocksolutions.com. Call Richard at 417-327-6500 or email him at richard@handnhandlivestocksolutions.com.
- Visit Eunice Williams' website at: stockmanship.com to see an assortment of videos available for sale including Bud Williams' 5 hour presentation at the 1990 Stockman Grass Farmers Grazing Conference DVD set for \$200 and the new 18 hour external hard drive of video for \$750. Call Eunice at 417-719-4910 for more information.
- We highly recommend at least (though they are all excellent!) Vol 1, Issue 1 of the *Stockmanship Journal*. It's almost a book of the Bud Williams method of stockmanship. Buy them at stockmanshipjournal.com
- Buy the book, *Stockmanship*, by Steve Cote. To order, send \$20 plus \$3 shipping within the U.S. or \$12 shipping to Canada (all funds in U.S. dollars) to Butte SWCD, PO Box 819, Arco, ID 83213 or contact them at (208) 527-8557 ext 101 or frances.perkes@id.nacdn.net.

"It takes 40 years to learn how to handle cattle, but you can go to Philadelphia and learn to be a lawyer in eight."
— Bud Williams