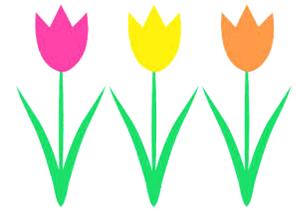


# Countryside Veterinary Clinic

## May 2016 Newsletter



### Dairy Stockmanship

Peter G. Ostrum, DVM

The veterinarians at Countryside recently received formal training in dairy stockmanship from Dr. Fred Muller, an animal handling specialist from Washington State, courtesy of Merck Animal Health. Dairy stockmanship concerns the interactions between people and cows when doing everyday tasks on the dairy. For the safety of the animals and all dairy workers, stockmanship skills are important not only for freestall herds but tie stall cows as well. Moving cattle from pen to pen or stall to stall, loading cattle onto a trailer or moving heifers to pasture all require appropriate animal handling skills.

Moving cattle with inappropriate methods will often cause cattle to slip and fall especially on concrete surfaces. Nervous and excited cattle may injure themselves or the people trying to move them. In addition, low stress handling has many benefits prior to milking. Calm cows will kick and defecate less allowing for a proper milking prep procedure with good milk letdown.

In-order to work with cattle safely and efficiently it helps to understand cow behavior. Their behavior is a product of species biology and environmental variables. As a prey animal, cattle feel safer when they're part of a group. Past experiences (how the animal has been previously treated is extremely important) and the present situation will dictate how the cow reacts to human pressure. Cows will use their 5 senses to evaluate possible predators with sight and hearing being the most important. With that in mind, we always need to let cattle see where we are. (Moskin Farms) Remember that if you can see her eye, she can see you.

The ultimate goal of proper stockmanship is to safely move, stop, start and turn cattle when needed without undue stress to the cows or people. A key component of working with livestock is understanding flight zones and the concept of pressure and release.

Dr. Paul Rapnicki, while at the University of Minnesota, provided an excellent summary of this important concept. Pressure-release: *"In discussions on handling cattle, people frequently refer to flight zone of an animal. It is useful to think about the flight zone in a conceptual manner. As you approach the flight zone of an animal, they will begin to feel pressure from your presence and respond. The exact response distance will constantly be changing depending on all the factors influencing the animal. By closely observing the response of the animal as you approach her, you will be able to see when you are exerting pressure. If you step back, you can release some or all of the pressure. The key point is that we can move animals by exerting pressure and varying the amount of pressure. The amount of pressure the animal feels depends on the distance and angle of the pressure. It is important not to over-pressure or to apply pressure in an unpredictable manner to the animal. The correct way to pressure depends on situation and properly reading the way the animal responds."*



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In summary, there are several rules to remember when handling cattle that may help you with your daily tasks:

1. Cows sense pressure and will move away from the source of that pressure.
2. Cows want to follow other cows.
3. Cows want to return from where they came from.
4. Cows move in the direction they're facing.
5. Multiple factors will determine behavior: avoid loud noises such as yelling and whistling; striking or hitting is unexceptible behavior on any dairy and will only make the situation worse.
6. Skilled stockmanship actions take advantage of the basic natural tendencies of cattle, for example,
  - walking with cattle will tend to slow or stop them
  - walking against cattle will speed them up

Because these skills are so important for the safety of cows and people, the clinic would like to have a training session this summer. Anyone who is interested in learning more about dairy stockmanship, please let your herd veterinarian know or contact the office so that we can arrange an appropriate time suitable to all interested farms.

## **2017 Lewis County Rabies Clinic**

**Wednesday - May 24<sup>th</sup> at**

**Lowville Town Barn from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.**

**All cats should be in carriers or confined in pillowcases. Dogs must be on a leash.**

## **Lewis County Fair: July 18 – 22, 2017**

[www.lewiscountyfair.org](http://www.lewiscountyfair.org)



**Reminder** - If you're planning to exhibit livestock at county fairs this summer now is the time to have health papers prepared. As specific vaccination and testing requirements must be met, please schedule an appointment with your herd veterinarian as soon as possible.



**Read our newsletters:** Remember that if you spot your name in our newsletter and call us within 5 days of the billing date, we will give you a \$10.00 credit on your bill.