

# Over The Wire

A Beef Cattle E-Letter for Area Cattle Producers

## Loading and Hauling Cattle Safely

By: Jim Church

University of Idaho Extension

### *I Can't Afford to Get Hurt!!*

During this time of the year when cattle producers are loading and moving cattle, it is extremely important to pay attention to detail when it comes to safety. No one can afford to get seriously hurt or worse.

There have been chapters in books written about how to safely handle cattle. This is a short newsletter so I will concentrate on loading and hauling safety tips.

Before we get into that discussion, everyone that raises cattle knows that there is danger involved when handling cattle. In a study conducted by the Center for Disease Control in 2009, of farm related fatalities in the U.S. between the years 2003 and 2007, there were a total of 2,334 deaths due to farm accidents. 108 or 5% of these deaths were cattle-caused fatalities. The study didn't report the number of accidents where injuries occurred and we know that every month there are hundreds of people hurt while handling or moving cattle.

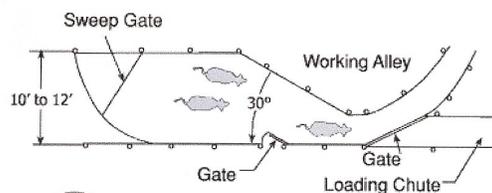
It should be the goal of every producer to analyze their handling and loading facilities to ensure safety for themselves, their families and employees. Also, anyone handling cattle should be given training on the proper way to move cattle safely.

### *Facilities*

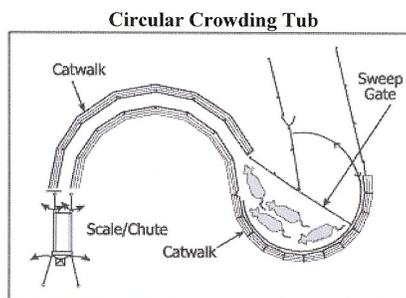
There are a number of very good plans that are

designed to combine working facilities and load out areas. Dr. Temple Grandin from Colorado State University is the world's expert on cattle facilities. She has developed plans that can be accessed on the Internet.

A well planned working facility and load out area allows cattle to flow smoothly while providing handlers with access to the cattle without being in the pen with them.



Don't angle both sides!



*Straight sided crowding pen (top) and a circular crowding tub (bottom).*

Ohio State University produced a publication entitled, "Cattle Handling and Working Facilities" that contains some simple but very useful examples of working facilities and load out areas. These plans emphasize handler safety.

The two designs found on the first page of this letter are excellent plans. The circular design does not show a load out area, however a gate can be added close to where the chute is located that will open up into a loading area.

Again, whatever design you have or hope to have in the future should emphasize handler safety. Catwalks along alleys, swing gates or tubs that keep handlers away from the cattle is critical.

### ***Look Out She's On The Fight!***

We have all heard many funny stories by cowboy poets about the wild cows and the train wrecks they cause. Most of us have had our turn with this scenario. Understanding animal behavior will help us to avoid these situations along with having good facilities and using appropriate cattle handling techniques.

Dr. Temple Grandin, recommends the following when handling cattle:

1. Keep cattle calm.
2. Move cattle at a walk or trot.
3. Reduce noise.
4. Eliminate electric prods.
5. Use behavioral principles, ie. Flight zone.
6. Make cattle flow.
7. Remove distractions.
8. Acclimate cattle to handling.

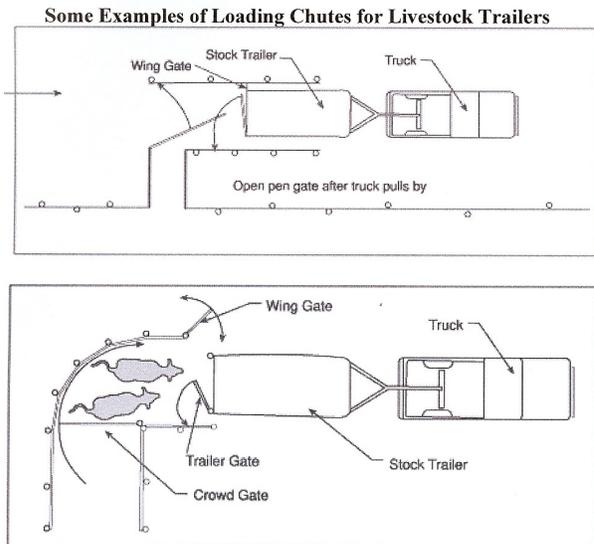
One of the biggest points to remember is the majority of accidents occur when an animal gets separated from the herd through sorting and gets excited causing them to become aggressive.

It is recommended to have safety passes strategically located in the working facilities. These are narrow openings just big enough to let a person slip through and escape an aggressive animal.

### ***Loading Cattle***

Loading cattle into trailers creates the perfect time

for accidents to occur if we are not careful. Having the correct load out facility will help reduce the chance of an accident or injury. Below are two designs for load out pens that were developed by Ohio State University:



The top design is a pull through plan where the truck and trailer pull into the loading area. A gate swings shut behind the trailer. There is a wing gate that closes off one side of the trailer and the end gate closes off the other. Cattle are easily loaded and unloaded. We use this design at the Idaho County Fairgrounds to load and unload livestock and it works great.

The bottom design utilizes a tub to push cattle into the trailer. This design requires that the trailer be backed into place. I like the fact that the handler has very little contact with the cattle in this design. With catwalks on the sides, there should be little need to get in with the cattle.

### ***I Think I Can Get One More In!!***

Now be honest, we have all said this while loading cattle into our stock trailers. The question is, should we stuff the trailer to the gills? Probably not if we are concerned with our own safety and the safety of the cattle.

Overloading trailers is dangerous especially if we exceed the recommended Gross Vehicle Weight Rating of the truck. The truck may not be able to handle the load which creates a safety hazard.

Dr. Grandin has developed space recommendations for cattle that are hauled in trucks and trailers. Below are Dr. Grandin's recommendations:

Recommended Truck and Trailer Loading Densities

Avg. Weight	10% or more Horned or tipped	No Horns
800 lbs	10.9 sq. ft.	10.4 sq. ft.
1000 lbs	12.8 sq. ft.	12.0 sq. ft.
1200 lbs	15.3 sq. ft.	14.5 sq. ft.
1400 lbs	19.0 sq. ft.	18.0 sq. ft.

If you would rather look at the number of head versus space requirements, the table below outlines the recommended number of cattle at various weights that should be loaded into trailers.

Number of cattle that should be loaded based on trailer size and cattle weight.

Width	Length						Lbs
"ft"	"ft"	500 lbs	700 lbs	900 lbs	1200 lbs	1400 lbs	Max
6	18	17	12	9	7	6	8400
6	20	18	13	10	8	7	9300
6	22	20	15	11	8	7	10,200
7	20	22	15	12	9	8	10,800
7	22	24	17	13	10	8	11,900
7	24	26	18	14	11	9	13,000

**Contact Information:** Jim Church, 320 West Main, Grangeville, Idaho 83530; email: jchurch@uidaho.edu; phone: 208-983-2667.

**References:**

Grandin, Temple., Cattle Transport Guidelines for Meat Packers, Feedlots and Ranches. Dr. Grandin's website publication. October 2008.

Boyles, S., Fisher, J., and Fike, G., Cattle Handling and Working Facilities. The Ohio State University Extension Bulletin #906.

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**Summary**

Safety should be a top priority for every cattle producer. Steps should be taken to minimize the risk to you, your family and employees. Take the time to:

- ◆ Inspect your facilities before using them. Make repairs where needed.
- ◆ Work to improve the facilities to make them safer for handling and loading cattle.
- ◆ Make sure that you do not overload your trailer.
- ◆ Take the time to train your employees or other helpers on how to handle cattle and move them safely.

For more information on this topic or other cattle related issues, feel free to contact me.