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## PRESS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### LOW STRESS PROCESSING FOR FEEDYARD CATTLE

There's no secret about the benefits of low-stress livestock handling. Implementing these practices in the feedyard is especially beneficial for the safety of handlers when processing animals. Minimizing chaos and confusion during the process reduces stress on the cattle and potential for injury to handlers.

Analysis of the connection between low-stress handling and safety involving more than 1,800 cattle over a period of more than 20 years confirmed that most injuries related to cattle processing occur when low stress practices are not used.

Identifying and promoting feedyard processing safety principles is one of the aims of Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (CS-CASH). This University of Nebraska Medical Center group (<https://www.unmc.edu/publichealth/feedyard/>) is conducting two research projects (funded by National Institutes of Occupational Safety and Health) that are designed to make a positive impact on the sustainability of cattle feedyards through increased safety and health efforts.

Not only do appropriate livestock handling principles make feedyard cattle processing safer, these principles generally speed up the process and make the activity more efficient.

Rolling is an activity that can be used the day before or a few hours prior to processing to reduce animal fears and assess a cattle group's sensitivity or lack of sensitivity to handling. This practice involves moving the cattle out of their home pen to a new pen or area. This allows the animals to dissipate fears related to moving and learn to move away from the handler. The exercise, which can take as little as under four minutes, can help make it easier to move cattle through a processing facility.

The key handling principles involved in processing cattle include timing, draft size (the number of cattle coming into the facility) and momentum.

Timing involves determining when it's appropriate to bring groups of cattle into the processing facility based on processing that's necessary, significant weather conditions, etc. Processing cattle in any temperature elevates the animal's core temperature.

If cattle are stressed by severe cold or a recent blizzard, processing activities could lead to excessive stress.

To determine the appropriate size of a group that can smoothly move through the facility, identify the number of cattle that will fit in the snake. It's recommended to move cattle into the tub and then directly into the snake.

Overfilling the tub generates confusion as cattle mill around inside it. This commotion wastes time and distracts the cattle. It causes them to fear processing activities and be much less cooperative with handlers.

The degree of momentum needed to bring cattle from the tub into the snake will vary with each facility based on design. For instance, if the cattle pass a solid wall placement that has noise coming from behind it, greater momentum may be needed to move the cattle past the area and into the snake. Handlers should also take into account the number of turns and degree of turns, footing conditions and sensitivity of the cattle being handled.

Ideally, cattle should be guided single file into the snake. Handlers can use flags on the leading edge and trailing edge of the cattle group to help them move in a single file manner.

Proper momentum is the key handling principle for facilitating flow into and through the tub and into the snake. Setting the appropriate momentum when moving cattle into and out of the tub minimizes the need for constantly guiding cattle through the snake.

For cattle in the tub, pressure should be reduced as soon as they begin flowing through the snake. Keep in mind that cattle will perceive handlers on horseback as a more intense source of pressure.

If stalls occur at the opening of the snake, handlers can use an appropriate amount of pressure to guide animals into the snake. A leader can be guided into the snake so the rest of the cattle will follow. When stalls occur inside the snake, handlers can move from front to back opposite the movement of the cattle to help guide them forward.

Avoiding stalls is key to reducing animal stress and causing chaos. Transition areas are a common trigger for stalls or for cattle turning back. Handlers should avoid working from directly behind cattle, pushing or prodding them and making driving noises. This type of activity pulls the animals' focus away from the target they're being moved to and toward what they perceive to be a problem.

When appropriate momentum is applied to move cattle into and through the tub, it generally carries through, so they move easily into the chute and easily move out of it.

Once cattle learn to properly flow through the processing facility, they become less fearful when they're handled for subsequent reprocessing or re-implant events.

Focusing on the quality of processing and practicing recommended processing techniques results in efficient processing. If the focus is on speed, the process can actually take longer, and risk of injury rises significantly. Speed will come with consistent use of appropriate practices and techniques.

Because an infinite number of scenarios are possible when processing cattle at different facilities, which are sometimes less than ideal, learning the "bovine language" helps in understanding how to resolve processing issues.

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