

Stockmanship & Stewardship

by **KINDRA GORDON**, *field editor*

“Stockmanship, to me, is like a highway

roundabout,” said Curt Pate, a well-known livestock-handling specialist. He explained that those circular intersections make

people think as they navigate through the curves and outlets.

Likewise, Pate said, “Stockmanship

while working with livestock is kind of a roundabout. You’ve got to think. It’s tough. It’s a skill.”

Pate presented his thoughts and techniques during a Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) presymposium event Nov. 16, 2015, which was a precursor to the 24th Range Beef Cow Symposium hosted in November.

Regarding the value of stockmanship, Pate noted, “It’s not only about working animals; it’s about understanding animals. You need to be able to look at animals and know if they are content — if they have what they need.”

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He added, “The more you think and work at it and analyze your efforts after you get done working with a group of livestock, the better you’ll become, and it’ll improve your quality of life and improve our quality of beef.”

One of Pate’s fundamental techniques is the use of pressure.

“Pressure is what stimulates animals to move,” he said, using the analogy of the pressure of a storm that prompts animals to move forward to seek shelter.



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“It’s all about putting yourself in the right place at the right time with the animals to give the right amount of pressure, and then releasing animals to do what you’ve asked them to do,” he explained.

Rather than “low-stress handling,” Pate preferred terms like “good-flow handling” and “effective stockmanship.” He noted that in some situations, such as moving cattle into a chute or semi-trailer, more pressure may be needed. He emphasized that you do not want to panic the animals, but you may need to increase the pressure being applied to keep them moving.

“When cattle are too gentle, it makes them more difficult to move,” he shared, noting, “I’m not against hot shots. I think they are one of the most humane tools we have if they are used properly.”

The mood of the people working the cattle can influence their movement and reactions, Pate emphasized. “I believe

cattle can read people better than we can read them.”

He told the story of a producer who was angry while sorting cattle and the cattle refused to go by him.

“Fear, anger, whatever it is that is affecting your mood, cattle pick up

on that,” Pate explained. “So it is real important to keep your attitude right while working with livestock.”



Editor’s Note: Kindra Gordon is a cattlegirl and freelance writer from Whitewood, S.D. This summary is part of the Angus Journal’s online

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