USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Illinois Grazing Manual Fact Sheet

LIVESTOCK HANDLING FACILITIES

Pasture and Corral Handling Basics



General Information

Here are some tips to keep in mind when handling livestock in the pasture and corrals. This is a very brief summary of some of the Low Stress Livestock Handling methods that have been perfected by Bud Williams and captured in print by Dr. Temple Grandin from Colorado State University. For more instruction on Low Stress Livestock Handling go to the web link provided under references.

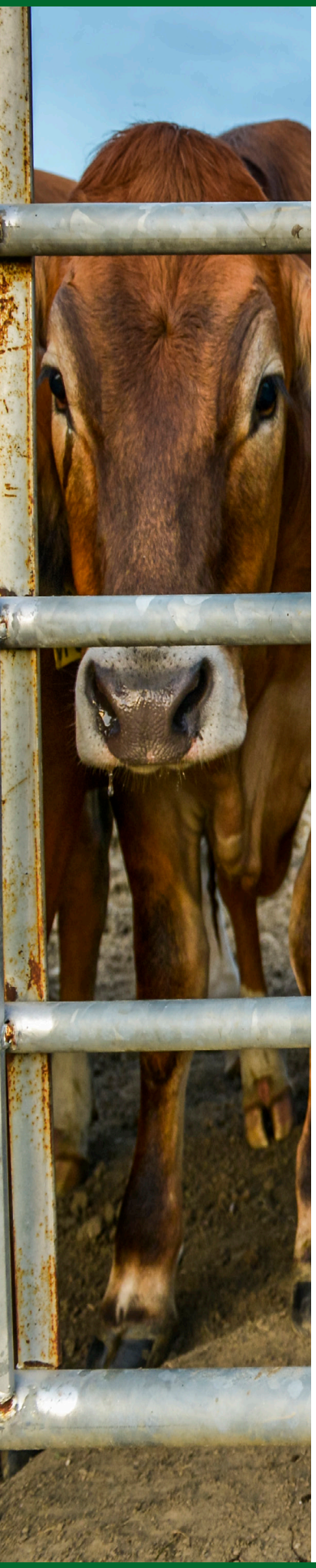
In the Pasture

- Remember flight zones. Use just enough pressure to move an animal without sending it over the fence.
- Point of balance. Livestock tend to move forward if you are "behind" their shoulder and backward if you are "in front" of their shoulder. If livestock won't move forward in an alley way, try putting down a hotshot and walking by them from front to back.
- Take your time. It is faster to do it right the first time than to do it twice.
- Keep moving. People in motion are easy for the livestock to see and relate to. When the motion stops, livestock get nervous. Their instinct is to turn around and clearly see what stopped, because it may be something with big teeth ready to pounce on them. Move back and forth behind a group of livestock, don't follow straight behind them.
- Walk in straight lines, not in curves.
- Guide the front animals, not the middle of the herd. The majority of the herd will follow the leaders.
- Don't stop when you reach an open gate. The livestock should know there is a gate there, so go ahead and put them through it at a reasonable pace. When you stop to "let them find the hole," they turn around and face you because you took all of the pressure off. Then you have to turn them around again and start all over. It is easier just to go straight through.
- Cull animals that are consistently wild or aggressive.

In the Corral

- Eliminate shadows, trash, chains etc. These things distract animals and cause them to balk.
- Don't yell.
- Remove any protruding bolts, nails, sharp corners, etc. that can cut livestock or people.
- Eliminate noisy chutes, headgates, etc.
- Always have an escape route in mind.
- Don't fight an animal that gets mad, because one of you will get hurt. It doesn't matter if "the animal wins."
- Remember that livestock like to go back where they came from. Use that to design facilities that help you get animals into the crowd tubs, to sort them, etc.
- Don't over fill the crowd tub and lanes.
- Don't put a back-up gate right at the entrance of the lane from the crowd tub. It will cause the animals to balk. Put it one body length up from the entrance.

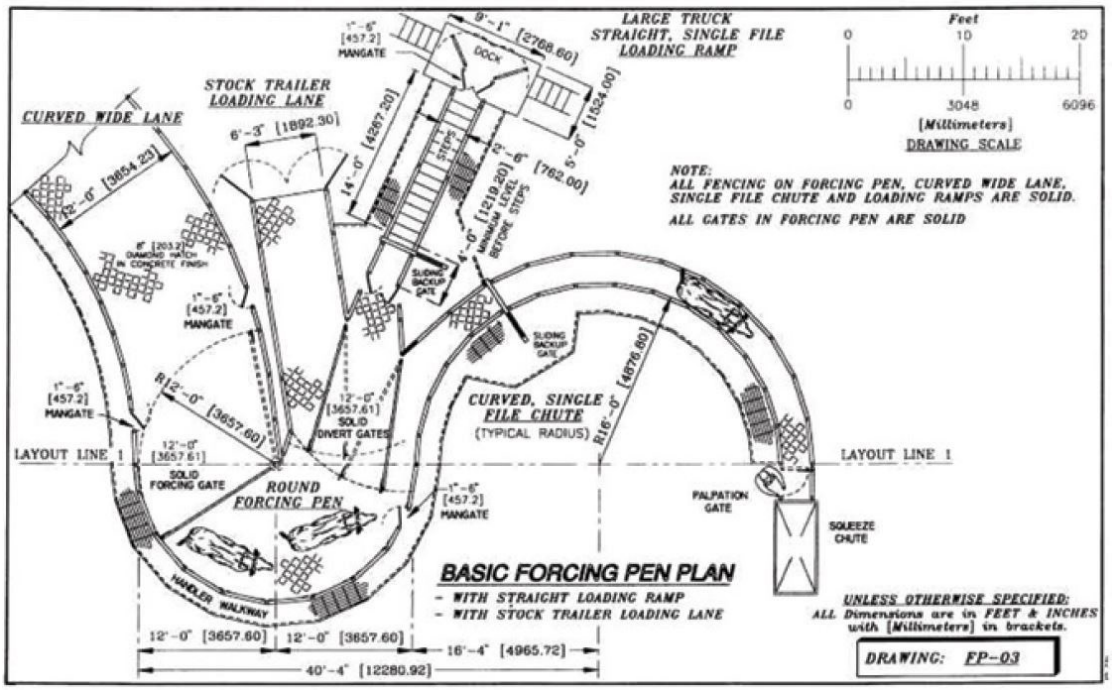
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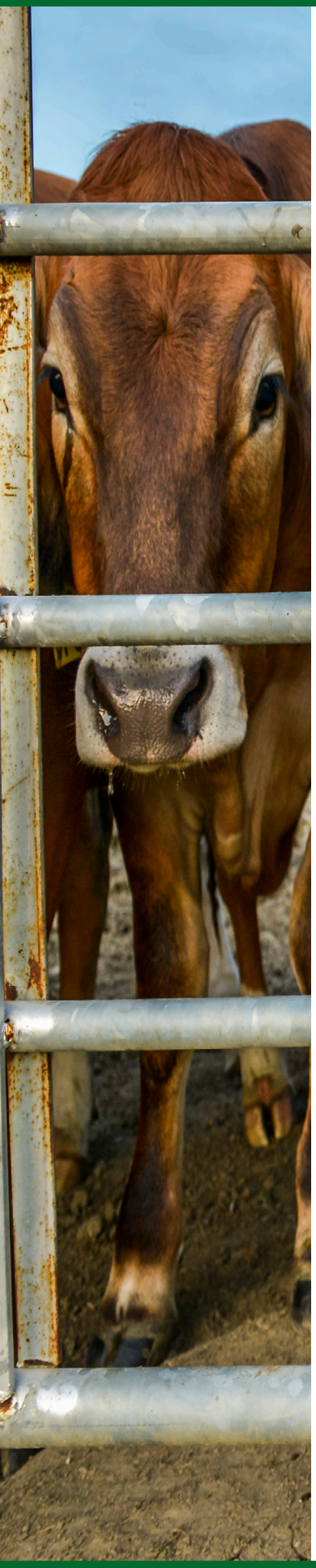
- Hotshots are a big can of worms. I think about hotshot use like this: Image that the hotshot has a short in the handle, and every time you shock an animal, you get shocked yourself. You can still use it when absolutely necessary, but that will cut down unnecessary uses.
- Take your time. We want to be efficient with our time, and we don't want to stress animals by making them stand longer than they have to. However, unlike the Olympics, there are no gold medals handed out for those who do it the fastest. Oftentimes, that animal would have moved if you had just waited two more seconds before using the hotshot.
- Before you go to handle livestock, discuss the plan and goals with your crew.

The following four diagrams show potential designs for handling animals.

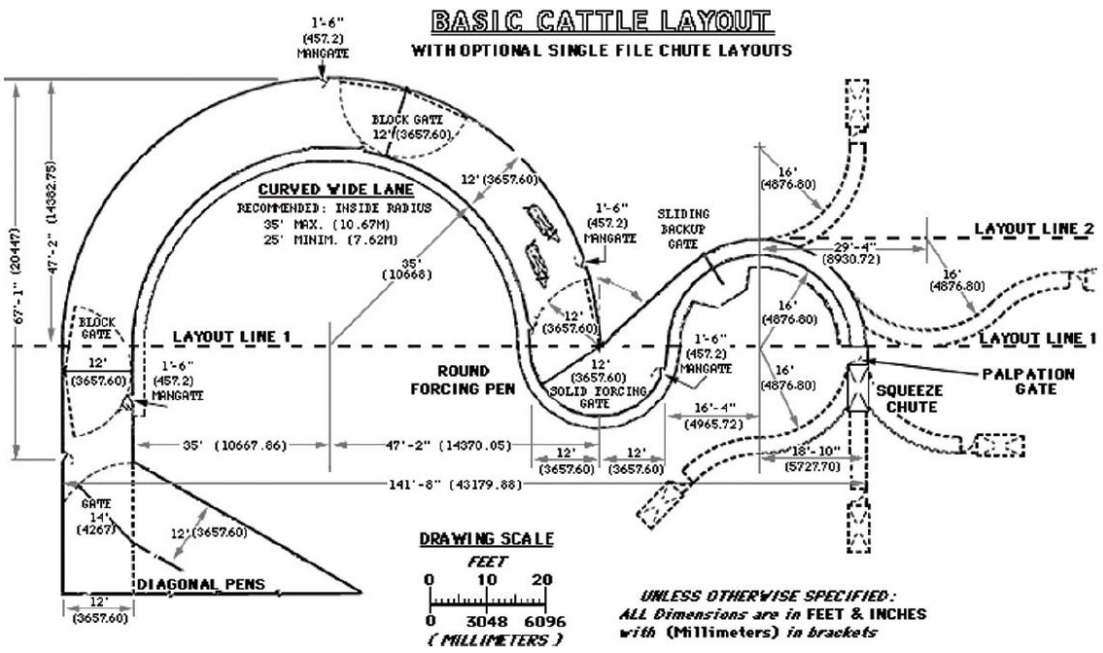
Basic Forcing Pen



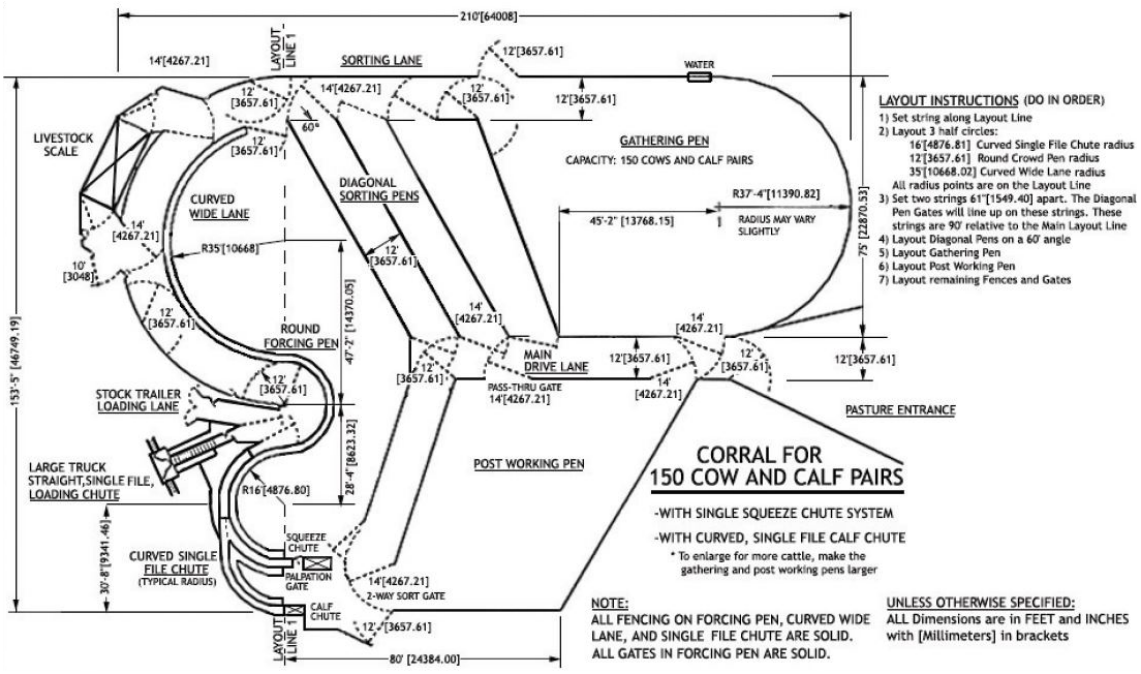
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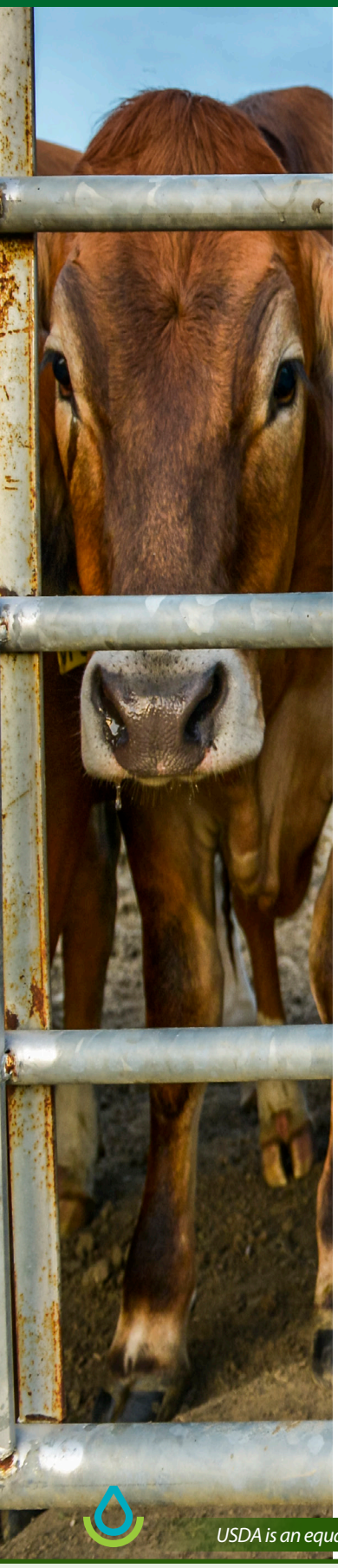
Basic Cattle Layout



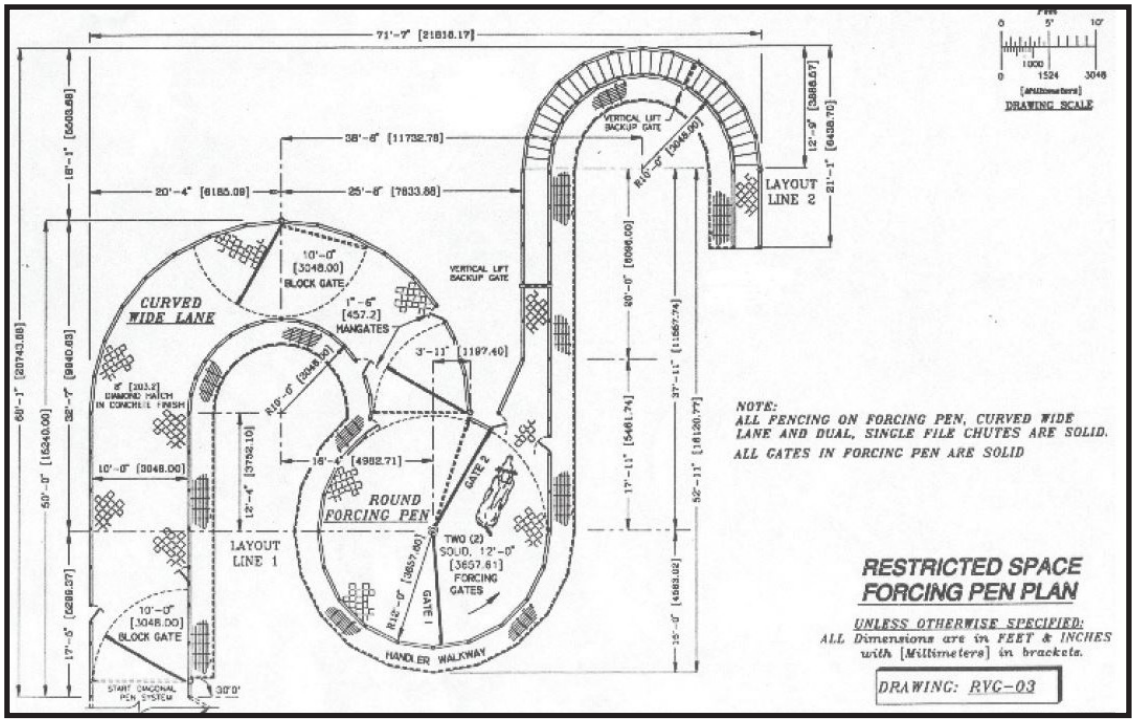
Corral for 150 Cow/Calf Pairs



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Restricted Space Forcing Pen Plan



References

For more information about safe and effective livestock handling, go to http://grandin.com/behaviour/principles/flight.zone.html on the web.

"To really test a marriage, have a husband and wife sort cattle together." By Dr. Ron Hanson, Univ. of Nebraska

By: Ryan Reuter with the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, Inc.

Dr. Temple Grandin is nationally known for her work on Livestock Corral designs and animal behavior research. Attached are a few of her corral designs. This and much more are located on her web site: http://www.grandin.com

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