

# Tips On Animal Handling Facilities

Every beef operation, regardless of size, needs some cattle handling facilities. They are needed when you treat, sort, spray, weigh, brand or ear tag, pregnancy test, or load and unload cattle. Labor saved in handling and treating cattle will pay for the facility in a short time, e.g., veterinary fees may be reduced if adequate and efficient facilities are provided. Construct the handling facility in a location convenient for moving cattle in and out with minimum labor. The dimensions of a handling facility and items to include depend on the number of cattle to be handled.

The primary reasons for building cattle handling

facilities are:

- Direction and control of animal movement.
- Reduction of cost and labor requirements to handle animals.
- Safety of workers and animals.
- Treatment of animals on the farm.

Because snow, wind, sun and shadows affect cattle handling, indoor set-ups are becoming more popular. Provide protection from prevailing winds, and locate to avoid ice build-up and long shadows on the north side of structures.

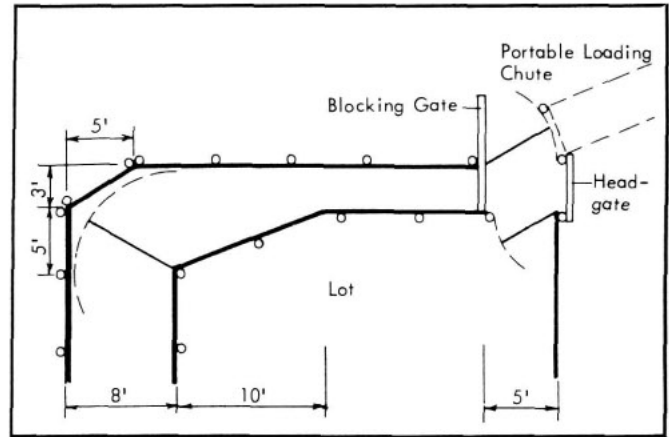
The first handling item needed is a headgate. Even with only a few animals, a place is needed to restrain animals. The headgate can

be simple, like a cow stanchion, for small numbers of relatively tame animals. For range animals, a gate is needed that opens widely so the animal walks through when released—excited animals won't back

up easily to leave by a side exit.

A complete cattle handling facility provides an organized system for these functions:

- Gathering



## Corral dimensions.

Use dimensions for over 1200 lb for cow-calf operations.

	To 600 lb	600-1200 lb	Over 1200 lb
1. Holding area sq ft/head	14	17	20
Crowding pen sq ft/head	6	10	12
2. Working chute with vertical sides			
width	18"	22"	26"
Desirable length (min.)	20'	20'	20'
3. Working chute with sloping sides			
Width at bottom inside clear	15"	15"	16"
Width at top inside clear	20"	24"	26"
Desirable length (min.)	18'	18'	18'
4. Working chute fence			
Height—solid wall	45"	50"	50"
Depth of posts in ground	36"	36"	36"
Overall height (7' clear min. below cross ties to walk under)			
Top rail, farm cattle	55"	60"	60"
Top rail, range cattle	68"	72"	72"
5. Corral fence			
Recommended height	60"	60"	60"
Depth of posts in ground	30"	30"	30"
6. Loading chute			
Width	26"	26"	26"-30"
Length (min.)	12'	12'	12'
Rise in/ft	3½	3½	3½
Ramp height for:			
Gooseneck trailer	15"		
Pickup truck	28"		
Van type truck	40"		
Tractor-trailer	48"		
Double deck	100"		

- Directing flow
- Holding
- Sorting
- Positioning
- Restraining
- Elevating or lowering

A cattle handling system is made up of components selected and located to perform these functions. A system may include all or some of these components.

**Gathering** moving cattle from a large area to a smaller area such as from a field to a holding pen, or from a holding pen into a working chute, is much easier when there is a funnel-shaped approach to the smaller area. Woven wire fencing provides the funnel approach for a gate.

**Directing flow** Cattle flow is one of the best yardsticks for evaluating a cattle handling system. Cattle move more easily and quickly when directed and controlled by fences and gates. Cattle move from the point of entry into the handling system, through a sorting alley, to the working chute, and to the exits. In large handling facilities, the working alley is a separate component. In smaller facilities, pens serve as the working alley to direct flow or movement.

Solid sides and an angle or curve

prevent one steer from seeing where the animals ahead are going, so cattle tend to move more easily.

**Holding pens** provide both cattle separation and cattle holding before or after going through the working chute. Pen sizes vary with the number of cattle to be handled—about 12-20 sq ft/mature animal. Provide a holding pen to keep those cattle released from the working chute separated from those yet to be worked. Make it as large as the holding pen from which cattle come into the working chute.

**Sorting and cutting gates** that are properly sized and located in the holding pens, working alley, and working chute provide for easy and most positive sorting. Make sure gates swing the right way and are sized to fit the alleys or openings. Many gates must swing 180° to allow cattle flow in the right direction.

**Positioning** Cattle are positioned by chutes, headgates, squeezes, chute hold backs, and blocking or crowding gates. The locations of components are important both in directing cattle flow and in controlling movement.

The crowding and working chute area is the heart of a cattle handling system. Proper design and construction of the working chute and its

components help achieve labor efficiency.

Working chute features for large animal numbers include: totally enclosed sides, sloping sides, 18' minimum length, overhead restrainers, concrete floor, and curved layout.

For smaller units, straight chutes with straight sides are adequate. An 18' chute holds 3 head. A quarter circle with a 12' crowding gate holds 6-9 mature cows.

Don't build the chute too wide.

**Restraining** Headgates, squeezes, and stocks restrain cattle for treatment, branding, etc. A tilting table restrains the animal and lowers it to a horizontal position for treatment, hoof trimming, etc.

**Conditioning lots** Incoming cattle are apt to be hungry, thirsty, and motion sick. They need hay and water. Conditioning lots in the corral area utilize handling equipment and are convenient for observation.