***PART 1**: Cattle Corral Design*

One-Man Cattleyards

A new concept in circular design from New Zealand

by John Kersten

Whether constructed from treated timber or pipe, the yards you build today will last you at least 40 years. A yard that flows well will save you many hours of frustration and extra work.

Gary Wakelin manages a property running 650 head of cattle at Parangahau in Hawkes Bay, New Zealand. He is very pleased with the operation of his new yards. "I looked at quite a few designs before deciding on this one," he says. "I wanted yards that I could manage easily by myself. One that cattle would flow through without having to be forced too much. I'm pleased with what I got."

Even the first time he used the yards, cattle moved into and through them very well. "I expected the cattle to be a bit weary the first time through, but they walked into it with no trouble," says Wakelin.

Trials with cattle have shown that they move best through curved narrow alleys. This shape creates the illusion that there is an escape route ahead – enticing cattle forward.

Wakelin's receiving pens curve around in almost a full circle, enticing cattle into and through them. They are only about 7 yards wide, enabling one man to manage their full width. The narrow pens also prevent large groups of cattle milling around – as they will often do in wide pens.

Sorting Pen

In the center of the yards, a circular pen enables cattle to be sorted and drafted into four separate pens. "The central pen is a great idea," says Wakelin. "It's ideal for sorting cattle into different groups for selling."

A small circular pen with a revolving gate receives cattle from any of three pens, and feeds them into the chute. The revolving gate reduces the size of the pen as cattle enter the chute – again making it easy for one man to manage. "Cattle move through this pen into the chute very well," Wakelin says. "The calves shot in there without a hand being laid on them."

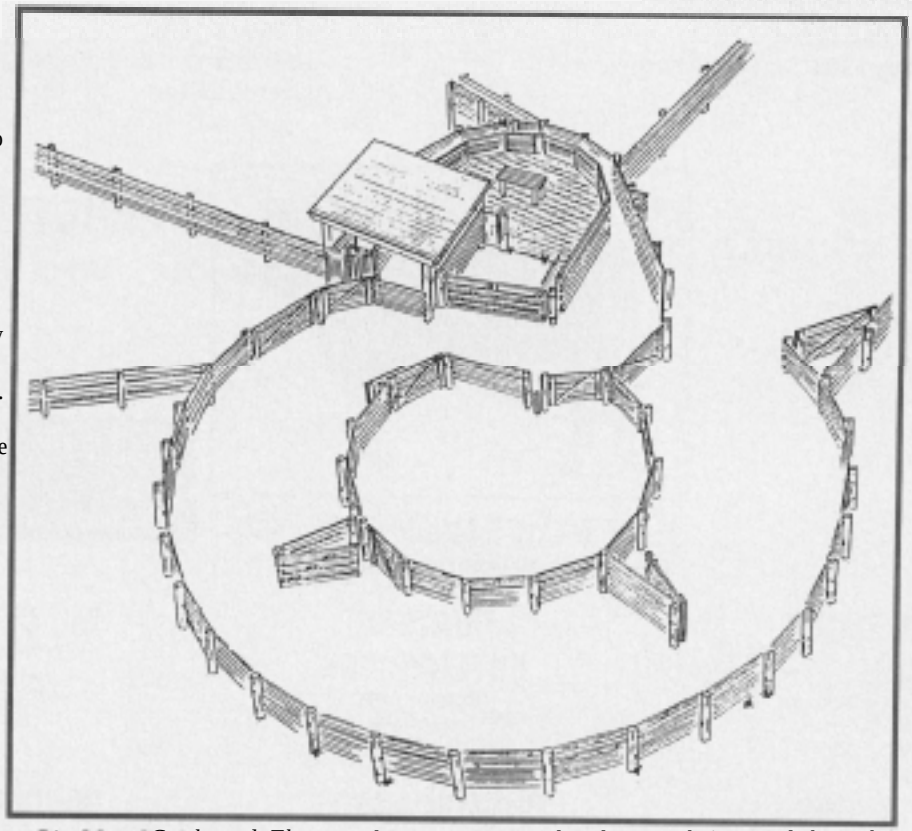
With the forcing pen being able to be filled from any one of three pens, the yards become more versatile. The pen from which cattle flow best can be used as the main filling pen. The different locations of cattleyards causes factors, such as the sun, and ground slope, to influence the direction in which cattle move best.

Semi-Circular Chute

Wakelin likes the idea of a semi-circular chute with the working area inside the circle. "The curved chute works very well," he says. "It's a good area to work in."

The chute curves back around to the other pens, allowing drafting back into any of the three pens or into the holding paddock outside the yard. The front of the chute is "forked" with one "fork" leading to the forcing or crowding pen, and the other to a possible weight scale area. The fork allows one animal to be held in the forcing pen while the others continue on through the chute.

Although Wakelin hasn't put in a set of weighing scales yet, one fork will



*One-Man Cattleyard–The curved narrow pens tend to draw cattle into and through them. Versatility is also a feature with cattle able to enter the yards from either end, and the forcing **pen** from any of three directions. Other features include the protected inside working area, and four-way drafting out of the single-file chute.*

be used for a scales area. Many cattlemen prefer the scales to be separate from the forcing pen, as cattle with unpleasant memories from this area become agitated and difficult to weigh.

A triangular drafting gate can be fitted at the junction of the fork. This gate stops cattle, as well as drafting them into either fork. A similar type of gate can be fitted to the front of the scales area for an exit /three-way drafting gate.

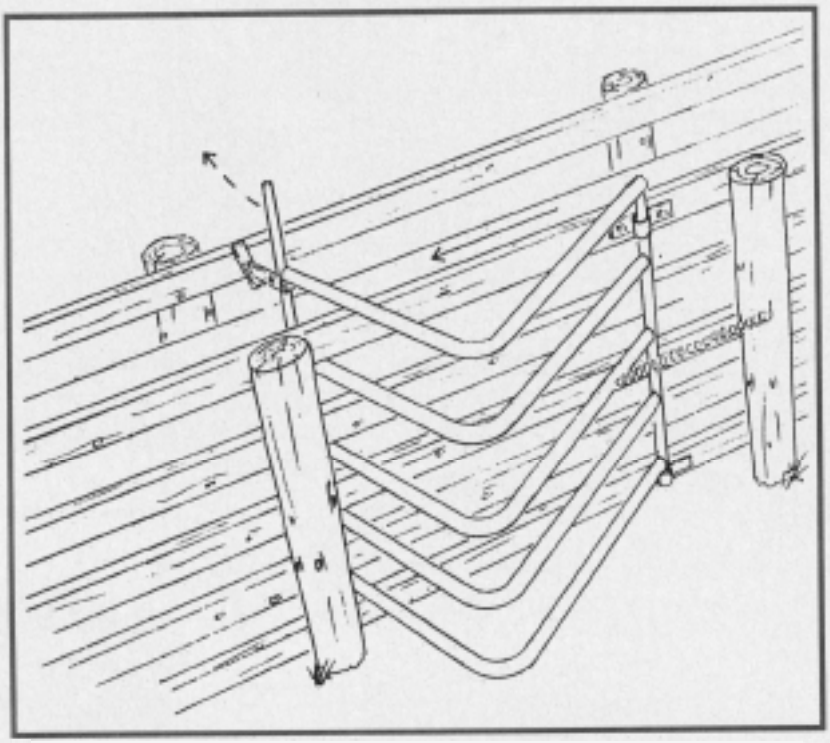
Inside Catwalk

Wakelin finds that with the catwalk inside rather than outside the yards, there's less distance to travel between the chute and the rest of the yards–again making life easier for the lone operator. With the working area inside the yards, full advantage is taken of cattles' natural tendency to circle the handler.

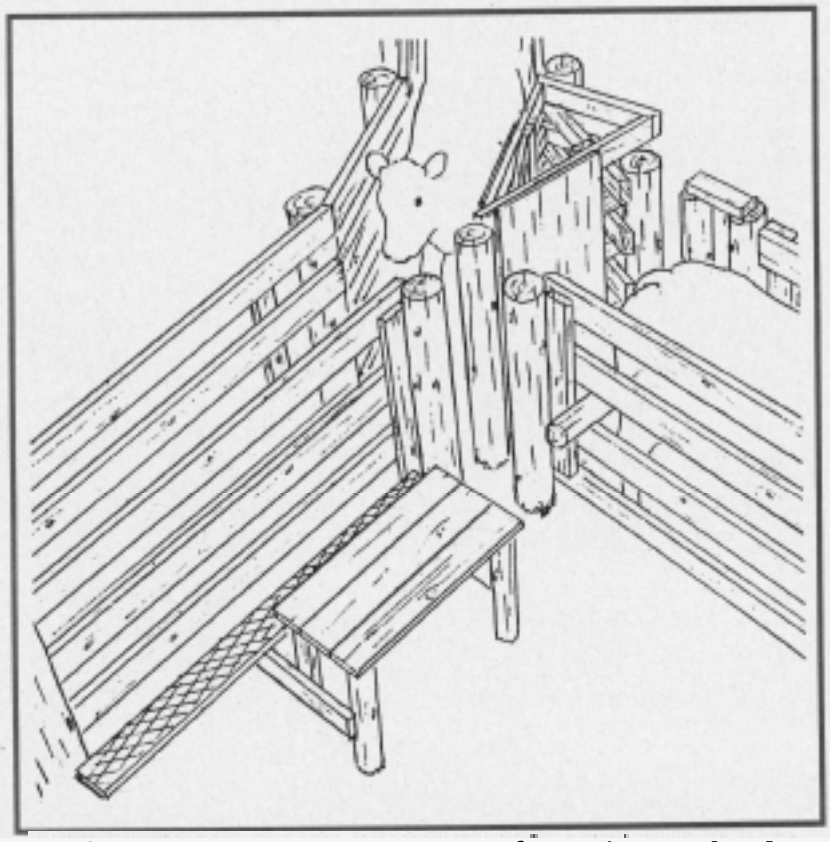
Another possibility is to have this whole semi-circular area raised to catwalk height (with earth or concrete). With a central covered bench, you have a protected area where gear can be kept clean, dry and accessible.

Gary Wakelin opted for the 500-mm wide catwalk, to which he stapled bird netting to prevent it from becoming slippery in the wet weather.

"It makes a comfortable working area," he says. "And I can always use it to hold a few cattle if I need to."



A simple chute gate. The bars move between the fence rails to block the chute The gate will stop a backing animal when still only partly closed. A spring holds the gate open – and a catch, closed.



This "forked" chute provides separate areas for veterinary work and weighing, and enables you to "hold" one animal while others move through the chute.

Post Positioning Method

This exact cattleyard plan can be set out on the ground very quickly using a novel method which makes construction of the *yards* much easier. Wakelin didn't use this method, as part of his outside fence had to fit in with an existing fence.

Details of this method, plus further measurements and details (fully illustrated) of every feature of this design, and other successful designs, are available in a package, which sells for $35 (five plans plus 30 ideas). For these or any other queries about this article, contact John Kersten, Box 8030, Rotorua, New Zealand.

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