

## **Incentive to learn stockmanship**

Curt Pate, Hubbard, TX

To create desire, there must be incentive. Incentive comes in many different forms: monetary, peer pressure, pride, tradition, fear, laws, quality of life, and influence from others, to name a few.

Let's use the example of a foreign language. Many people in the U.S. want to learn to speak a different language, but never do it. If we use the example of an immigrant from Mexico, most learn to speak or at least understand English fairly quickly. There is much more incentive when you involve all the reasons mentioned above, for the immigrant.

For someone just wanting to be able to go on a trip to Mexico, even though we would like to speak the language, we don't have enough incentive to do it, so we learn a few words and phrases, and even though we aren't completely satisfied, it gets us by.

Stockmanship and stewardship are similar. As previously discussed, both are learned skills. There must be incentive to put forth the effort to improve the skill, and the opportunity to learn.

We have seen a huge increase in the popularity of stockmanship. It would be rare these days to see a cattle industry magazine that does not have some mention of cattle handling. The reason for this is that we have incentive.

Things like more laws on animal care, technology influence (i.e., undercover videos), promotion by cattle organizations, and customer demand are examples of these incentives. Finally, I believe it is becoming acceptable to learn about animal handling.

This is peer pressure I am talking about. The movie about Temple Grandin was a great display of this. The ideas she presented in the feed yard came under terrible resistance, and I feel it is because of two main reasons. First, the cattle handlers felt they had the high level skills to make the cattle do what they needed them to do (i.e., cow fighting skills). What was being presented was a threat to the need for that skill, and because this was coming from an outsider that was not part of their culture and tradition, they felt uncomfortable with it. Second, humans don't like change, especially if it is too much too fast.

In the past ten years or so we have seen a shift in attitude toward stockmanship and stewardship. It has been proven the consumer wants to know animals are treated properly. Stock will gain better, sick and death loss will be less, injury to animals and humans will be less, and it is easier to train people to work animals properly, in less time.

Take some time to figure out if you have the incentive and desire to improve.

Remember... "It's the right thing to do," for all the reasons I mentioned above, but I feel the most important factor that should cause you to want to improve stockmanship skills is the satisfaction and fulfillment you get from improving the way you do things.

Some of the best times I've had working have been handling cattle, and some of the worst have been handling cattle. As I gain more knowledge and skill, the good times are getting even better, and the bad are few and far between.

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Curt Pate

curtpatestockmanship.com