

Cattle – Basic Care

- Cattle are quiet and gregarious in nature and tend to follow a leader. They are so gregarious that separation from the group can be stressful to the cow.
- Handled gently and frequently, most cattle can be easily led and become trustful of handlers.
- Creatures of habit, adapt to a set feeding and management routine.
- Knowledge and use of the flight zone of cattle are important. To determine the flight zone, approach the cow and note what distance it moves away. When the handler is outside of the flight zone, the cow will turn and face the handler.
- Flight zones can be used to move cattle efficiently.
- Sensitive to intermittent loud noises, high frequency, and hissing sounds.
- Cattle have panoramic vision which allows them to see almost 360° without turning their head. However, vision at the outer edges is distorted. For this reason cattle are easily spooked, so solid sides on working chutes will allow cattle to be moved more easily.
- Cattle are color-blind and have poor depth perception. They also have a fear of stepping over grid patterns. This is the reason cattle guards are so effective at keeping cattle confined.
- Minimum area sizes are specified in the Animal Welfare Regulations, The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, and The Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Agriculture Research and Teaching. Exceptions must be approved by the IACUC.
- Every animal should have sufficient space to move about at will, adequate access to water and feed and a dry resting site, and the opportunity to remain reasonably clean.
- Cattle can thrive on pasture and roughage, nutritional needs are similar to sheep and goats.
- They can drink as much as 10-15 gallons of water per day.
- Should be provided with a mineral salt block.
- Good quality alfalfa may be provided at all times.
- Healthy cattle spend considerable time in sternal recumbancy, particularly after eating.
- Can be crowded head to tail in V-shaped working chutes.
- For individual restraint, a squeeze chute with head gate and tail gate is commonly used.
- For more specific species information, including physiologic data, breeding requirements, and procedural information, please contact the Office of Laboratory Animal Care (865-974-5634).