



# Good Production Practices: Using the Flight Zone to Handle Livestock

*Paige Pratt, Youth Livestock Extension Specialist, Virginia Cooperative Extension*  
*Rodney Leech, Extension Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Virginia Cooperative Extension*  
*John Thompson, Extension Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Virginia Cooperative Extension*  
*Phil Blevins, Extension Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Virginia Cooperative Extension*  
*Cynthia Gregg, Extension Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Virginia Cooperative Extension*  
*Eric Stogdale, Agriculture Teacher, Fort Defiance High School, Augusta County*  
*Heather McAndrew, Agriculture Teacher, Staunton River High School, Bedford County*

**Purpose:** To help children better understand livestock flight zones so they are able to move and handle livestock more efficiently and safely.\*

## Materials Needed

- One copy of the worksheet per youth or pair of youth. (The graphic could also be shown on a PowerPoint or projector rather than using the worksheet.)

## Steps

1. Read through the worksheet with the youth.
2. Have youth complete the group activity in groups of two to three.

## Remembering What Is Important

Understanding flight zones and points of balance is helpful when moving animals. By using flight zones, animals can be moved efficiently while keeping the safety of the animals and handlers in mind. Ask the youth questions about where an animal will move if the handler enters a specific area and approaches from a certain angle.

- If you wanted your steers to move forward and to the left, from where would you approach?
- What might happen if you enter the flight zone too quickly?
- What could happen if you approach the animal in its blind spot?

To help youth better understand the peripheral vision of an animal, help them get acquainted with their own peripheral vision. Have each youth hold their arms directly in front of them. Then, have them bring their arms out to their sides, spreading their arms just to the point where they can barely see their fingertips. Discuss what they have learned about their own peripheral vision and relate that to the vision of cattle.

*\*This activity has been developed to supplement the information that can be found in the National Pork Board Good Production Practice No. 10: Provide proper livestock care to improve well-being.*

## Using the Flight Zone to Handle Livestock

All livestock have what we refer to as a flight zone and point of balance. The picture below shows the point of balance and flight zone of cattle.

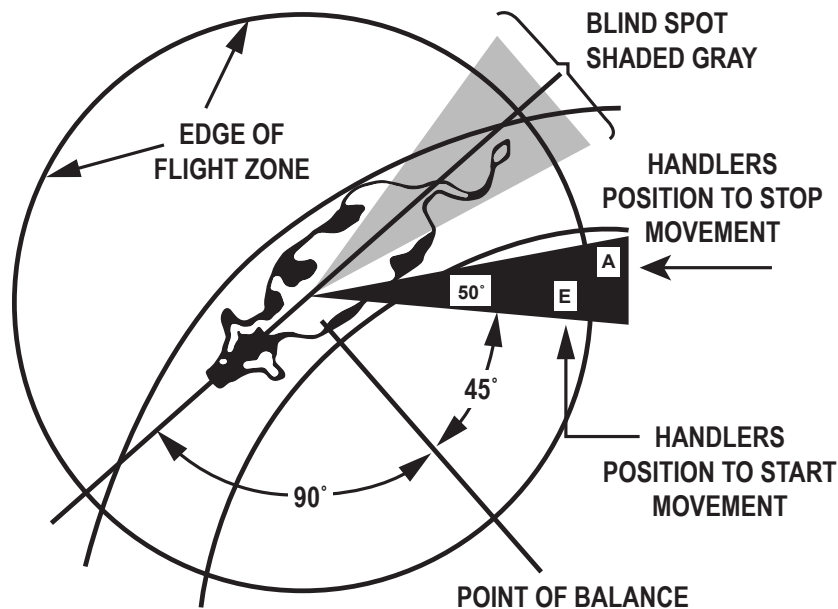


Diagram illustrates the general flight zone of an animal.

Reproduced by permission from Temple Grandin, "Understanding Flight Zone and Point of Balance for Low Stress Handling of Cattle, Sheep, and Pigs" (revised 2015). [www.grandin.com/behaviour/principles/flight.zone.html](http://www.grandin.com/behaviour/principles/flight.zone.html).

The flight zone is the area in which the animal feels safe. When a handler moves into the animal's flight zone, the animal will move away. The flight zone increases and decreases depending on how tame the animal is.

The point of balance is at the shoulder of most animals and is determined by their range of sight. How you approach the animal from its point of balance determines what direction it will likely move.

We can use the flight zone to our advantage when it comes to working and moving livestock. For example, if we wanted to move a cow forward, we would approach her from behind her point of balance and enter her flight zone, which will make her move away from us.

### Group Activity

To understand how an animal would feel, you need to herd your group members!

Select one member of your group to be the animal, and one to two others to be the handlers. Have someone decide the flight zone of the "animal" and make the point of balance his or her shoulders. With your animal partner thinking like an animal, it is the handler's job to move the animal from place to place.

Remember, move behind them to move them forward and move in front of them to move them back. Move to their right side to move them left and move to their left side to move them right. Take turns so everyone can understand what it would be like to be an animal or handler.