

# Safe Animal Handling

Scott Nash, Regional Youth Development Educator

## Goal (learning objective)

Youth will learn about the role of animal flight zones in safely handling and moving animals.

## Supplies

- Table
- Magnets - animal shapes where available
- Plastic farm animals and fence
- Wire - a short strand of bar wire and a short strand of smooth wire
- Nails or other objects that should not be in the pen of an animal
- Flight zone diagram that can be found at <http://www.grandin.com/behaviour/principles/flight.zone.html> or in PNW 593, *Youth Beef Quality Assurance Program Manual* (see resources below)

## Pre-lesson preparation

- Study the flight zone diagram and become familiar with the term “point of balance”

## Lesson directions and outline

### Introduction

Explain to the youth that all animals have a point of balance as well as a flight zone. Understanding how to approach animals and move them properly will keep youth and animals safe.

A key point is to make sure the pen is free from any hazards such as broken boards, protruding nails, wire, etc. Make sure there are no electrical wires or sharp edges the animal can come in contact with.

## Conducting the activity (DO)

Activity 1 - To demonstrate how livestock move away as someone moves into the animal's flight zone

1. Place one magnet on a flat surface.
2. Use the second magnet to approach the first, making sure the ends with the same magnetic polarity are pointed at each other. (The magnets will repel each other and the first will move away from the second.)

Activity 2 - To illustrate how flight zones work with people

1. Have one volunteer stand in front of the group.
2. As you talk about flight zones and personal space, approach the volunteer closer and closer until he or she moves back.
3. Try this again with one male and one female volunteer. Ask the girl to stand still and have the boy approach her until she moves back. Discuss how flight zones and personal space change depending on how well they know each other.

### Activity 3

1. On the table, set up the fence with a gate and place a plastic farm animal.
2. Have a participant demonstrate how they might approach the animal to turn it in a certain direction and move it through the gate.
3. Place nails, wire, or other objects on the table near the animal then work to drive the animal through the gate to avoid the objects.

**What did we learn? (REFLECT)**

- Ask: What happened when you moved the magnets closer together? (The magnets are like animals and act as if they have a flight zone.)
- Ask: What happens to the magnets if you put opposite ends towards each other? Why? (Discuss polarity.)
- Ask: What happened when the leader approached the volunteer when talking about flight zones? Why?
- Ask: What happened when the boy approached the girl? Why?
- Ask: What happens when nails, wire, or other objects are in the way when you try to move an animal?

**Why is that important? (APPLY)**

- Ask: Why is it important to know how to approach an animal to make it move in a certain direction? (Approaching them correctly will get the animal to move in the right direction and hopefully keep it from running away.)
- Ask: How does understanding flight zone and personal space help us when we communicate with others? (We are able to recognize by a person's body language how close we can approach him or her, allowing for more successful communication.)
- Ask: If a person is uncomfortable because you are in his or her flight zone, is the person listening to you?
- Ask: Why do we need to keep nails, wire, or other objects out of the pen of an animal? (Keeping the animal facility free from foreign objects can keep the animal from getting injured.)

**Resources**

- Ohio State University Extension. (2011). Working Safely With Livestock. *Beef resource handbook* (pages 4-1 through 4-5).
- Ohio State University Extension. (2008). Working Safely with Goats. *Goat resource handbook* (pages 31-33).
- Ohio State University Extension. (2011). Working Safely with Sheep and Caring for Animals. *Sheep resource handbook for market and breeding projects* (pages 103 and 136).
- Ohio State University Extension. (2000). Caring for Animals *Swine resource handbook for market and breeding projects* (page 24-2).