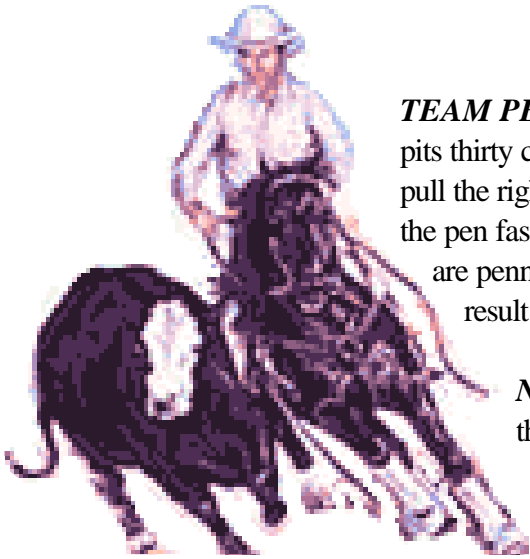


TEAM PENNING BASICS

by Frank A. Lucas



TEAM PENNING IS NOT A SCIENCE, IT'S AN ART. The competition pits thirty cattle against three horses and three riders to determine if the riders can pull the right three cows from the herd, push them down the arena and put them in the pen faster than any of the other teams. Penners are successful when the cattle are penned. If the allotted time expires or too many cattle cross the foul line, the result is a no time.

NO TIMES ALWAYS LOSE. The first objective is to put the cattle in the pen.

PENNING RUNS START AT THE CATTLE END OF THE ARENA. It is a test! Penning tests the cutter's ability to maneuver through the herd to extract one or more of the right cows. It tests the turnback riders abilities to control the trash cattle and support the cutter. A perfect cut occurs when the cutter pulls out the right cow, without trash, pushing it to the staging area at or near the wing. Do it three times, faster than anyone else and you'll be taking home a check!

TRASH KILLS A RUN. Too much pressure can create trash cows that can ruin a run:

- Overwhelm the on-side turnback rider,
- Leak up the center when the off-side rider doesn't cover the roll back or
- Leak up the opposite wall because the off-side turnback rider is covering the roll back.

GOOD TEAMS COMMUNICATE: short, easy to understand words that tell your partners what you see or what you are doing. *Black baldy right, I'm clear, I've gotta a duck, Gotcha covered, Center left black.*

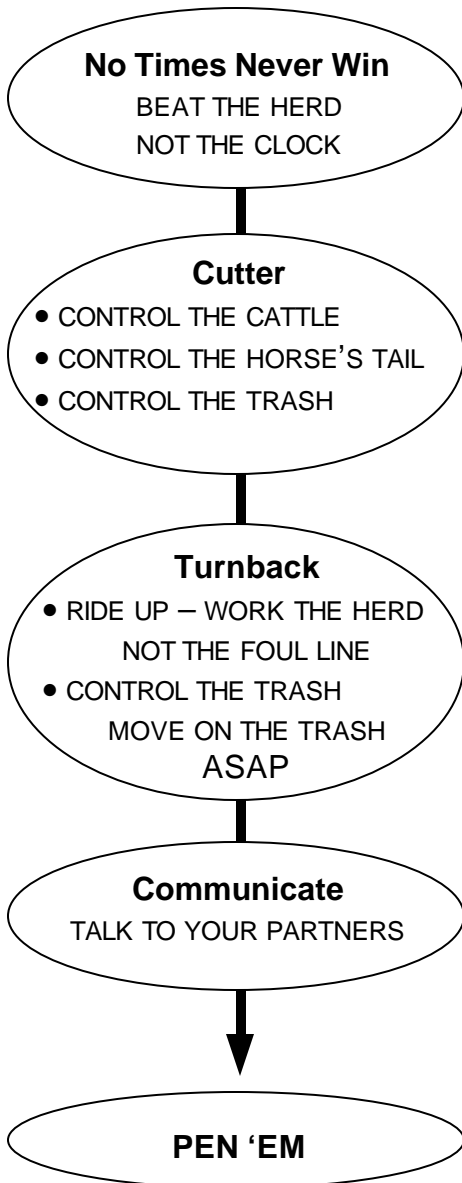
YOUR TEAM VERSUS THE CATTLE. The competition is your team against the cattle. There is an element of luck. One of two good cows might be on the edge and they'll walk right out! Hopefully, it's your team that post a great time - maybe not. If not, you might have a tendency to hurry up to beat the fastest time. You can only take what the cattle will give you. Work the herd - not the clock!

PRECISION, PATIENCE & DISCIPLINE. Set up the cattle and make the move! Blasting into the herd will give you a fast no-time. It take all three riders, doing their jobs – in the herd – going to the pen – at the pen – to get the job done. No times always lose. You must pen the cattle to have a chance to win. Consistency is the key.

LEARN A PATTERN - DO THE PATTERN . Consistent riders make their own luck.



TEAM PENNING BASICS



LEARN A PATTERN - DO THE PATTERN

- Start with confidence
 - Spread out at the start line
 - **SPEAK OUT THE NUMBERS ON YOUR SIDE**
- Cutter** – find your number before entering the herd
- Work in front of the herd
 - Enter the herd like there is no line man
 - Disturb as few cattle as possible
 - Push the cattle past the top of the pen
FRESHER CATTLE - SLOWER PACE
- Turnback** – ride up – manage the trash
- Work the herd not the foul line – ride up
 - Move on the trash as soon as possible – ride up
 - **TALK TO YOUR PARTNERS**

DO YOUR JOB GOING TO THE PEN

Fill the lane from your position in the arena;

- sweep (far fence)
- wing (center)
- hole (pen side).

Do not cross in front of your partners

Wait for your partners – stay in line going to the pen

- Sweep speeds up
- Wing stays under control
- Hole to top of the pen - stay until cattle are moving to the pen then go to the hole.

DO NOT LEAVE TOP OF PEN TOO SOON.

DO YOUR JOB AT THE PEN

- At the wing - rate your move with the sweep
- At the sweep - check at the pen to allow the cattle to mother up.
- At the hole - time your move with the sweep.
- **DO NOT OVERRIDE THE HOLE.**

STAY QUIET UNLESS YOU'VE MADE A MISTAKE

WORKING THE CATTLE

CATTLE ZONE

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work the in front of herd • Find the number before entering the herd • Look to the corners 1st • Use back wall to control the cattle. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of cattle before starting the cut. • Sort trash & isolate the good cow in the corner. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put good cow on the wall and push to the pen. • Stop, make sure the good cow stays put. • Return to the empty turnback position. |
|--|--|--|

OFF SIDE TURNBACK

- Ride up
- Stop trash from leaking up the off-side fence
- Support on-side turnback rider.
- Spot the next good cow to cut.
- Cut the next good cow once the 1st cutter has cleared

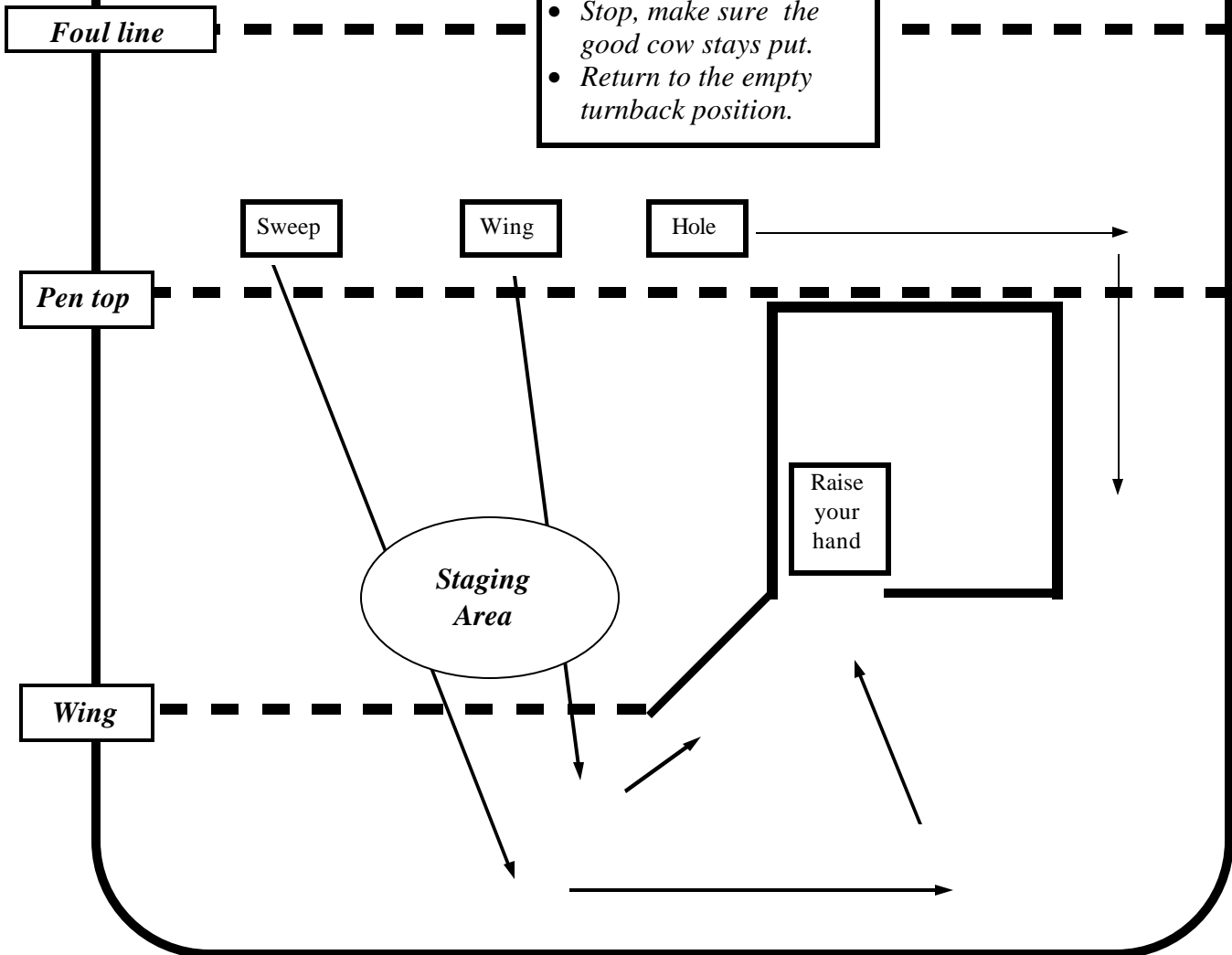
TURN BACK ZONE

RIDE UP **WORK THE HERD** **NOT THE FOUL** **LINE**

- Push good cow to the staging area
- Stop, make sure the good cow stays put.
- Return to the empty turnback position.

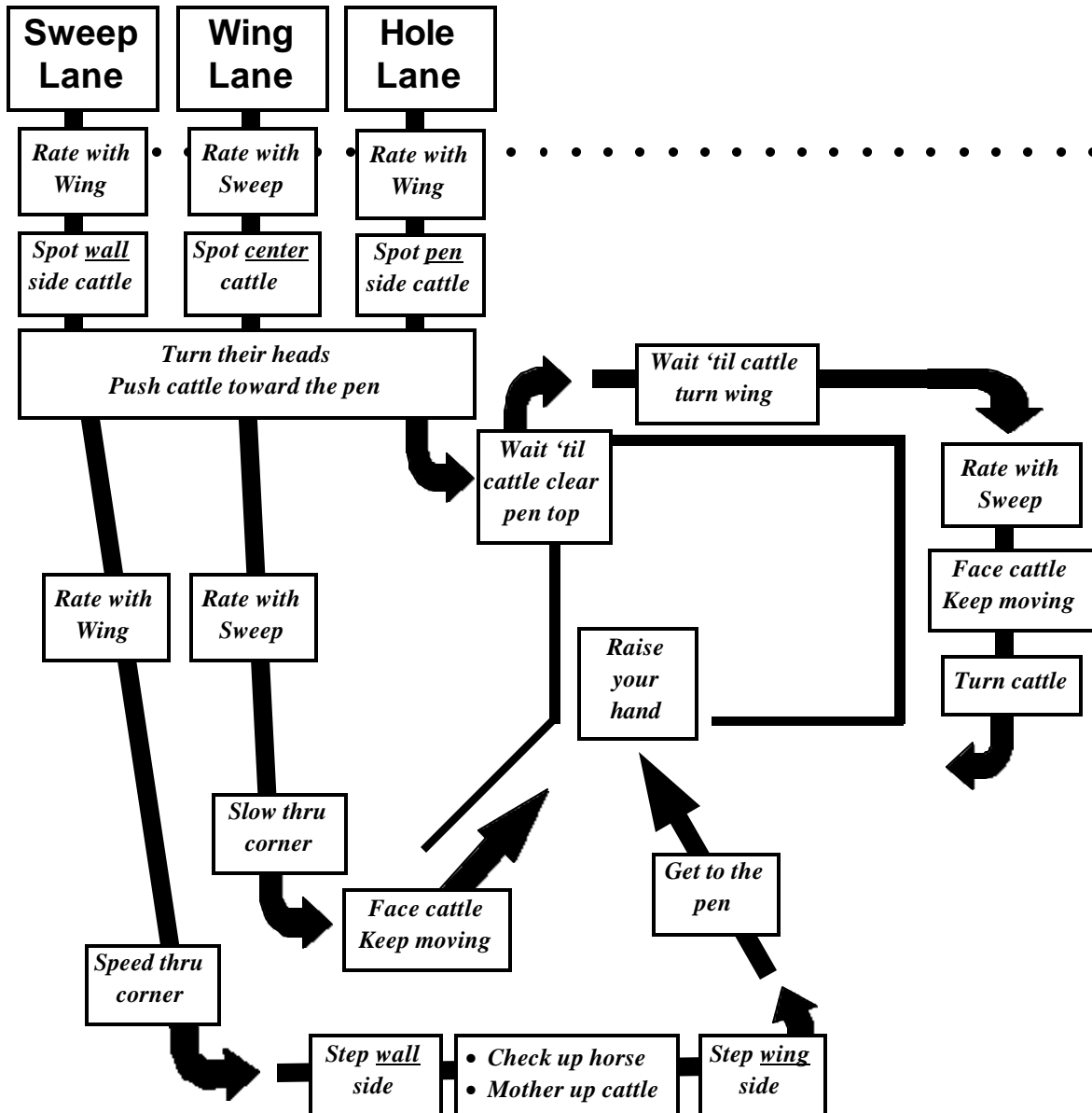
ON-SIDE TURNBACK

- Ride up
- Follow the cutter
- Turn or stop the trash
- Finish the cut
 - Support next cutter



GOING TO THE PEN

- DO NOT CROSS IN FRONT OF YOUR PARTNERS
- BE PATIENT – WAIT FOR YOUR PARTNERS
- BE PATIENT – WAIT UNTIL ALL THE CATTLE ARE IN FRONT OF YOU
- FILL THE LANES
- GET IN LINE
- TURN THEIR HEADS
- DO YOUR JOB AT THE PEN



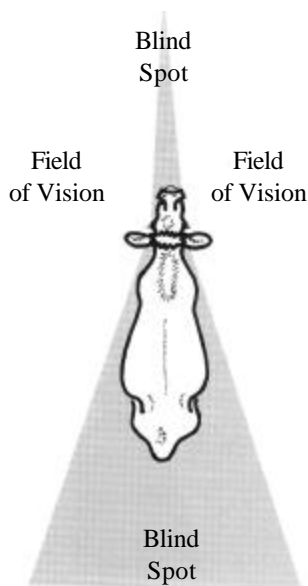
UNDERSTANDING HOW CATTLE REACT AND SEE

Team Penning is a competition between riders and cattle - and the cattle are pretty cagey critters – you would swear that cattle enjoy making penners look bad!

Since the beginning of time, cattle have been food for something. They have developed instincts, physical characteristics and a sixth sense for the environment around them help them survive. At the first sign of a threat, their survival skills kick in. The thing is, the cattle treat penners like they would any other predator – and that is what makes the competition between riders and cattle.

The cattle's first instinct is to stay with the herd - because there is safety in numbers. Once separated, cattle make one of two decisions – run away or run back to the herd. Separate the good cow from as much of the herd as you can ... to get control of the cut ... push the good cow all the way down the arena before turning back to the herd. Make sure he's staying put before leaving. If the cow is far enough away from the commotion, it will stay away - if not - it is coming back to the safety of the herd.

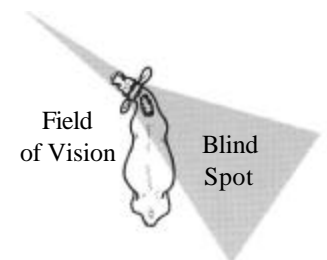
When the cattle can't get back to the herd they will run away - the closer the penner is to them the faster the cattle will run. Some penners call that pressure. When you hear someone say "back off!" what they are saying is take the pressure off the cattle by backing away from the cattle or the good cow. When you do back off, everything will slow down and allow you to regain control of the cattle - because the cow(s) feel less pressure. Caution is advised – if the rider is too close before the cow is separated from the herd, it will turn back to the herd. Horses need time to react to the cattle. Penners develop a feel for how close to work the cattle. It is a good idea to stay back 1 1/2 cow lengths until you develop the feel for your reaction time and the space your horse needs to respond to the cattle's maneuvers.



A cow's eyes are set on the side of its head. The design provides terrific side vision because cattle can see independently on each side. That is called field of vision. However, the side-set eyes affects their forward vision - cattle cannot see ten to fifteen feet directly in front of them. That area, along with the area behind the cow are called the blind spots.

Cattle turn their heads to change their field of vision allowing them to see behind. A rider can control a cow by moving into or out of the field of vision - when the cow sees a rider is in the field of vision it believes it's escape route is blocked. When the rider is out of the field of vision the cow will try to escape from the pressure toward the open field of vision.

Experienced penners often say "watch their ears." because when the cattle look behind, their ear turns in the direction that they are looking! Their ears can signal the direction the cow is thinking about going.



There are penners that swear a cow knows when you're looking at it ... sort of a sixth sense. It would sure come in handy if the eyes belonged to a mountain lion - wouldn't it? Maybe it is true. Believers say that when they're sorting off trash they try not to look at the good cow. Once the good cow is clear they bore a hole with their eyes all the way to the other end.

Remember – it is you against them and they would rather not! Watch them ears!

CUTTER

THE CLEANER THE BETTER. Each trash cow reduces your chances of a successful run. A clean cut improves your odds of success and it frees up the off-side turnback rider to find and begin the next cut. A clean cut has basic components:

- Find the number before entering the herd.
- Look to the corners for the 1st cut.
- Work the cattle in front of the herd using the back wall to control the cattle.
- Manage the trash by reducing the number of cattle affected before starting the cut.
- Sort the remaining trash in the corner to isolate the good cow.
- Put the good cow on the wall and push to wing area of the pen.
- Stop your horse, check the cow, return to the empty turnback position.

CONTROL THE TRASH BY REDUCING THE NUMBER OF CATTLE AFFECTED - BEFORE STARTING THE CUT. Less trash - faster cut - less risk! The back wall, corner and the side fence are your 4th partner, helping you eliminate the possibility that a cow will turn away from the pressure of the horse and rider. ***Your 4th partner is always there!*** When you are in front of the herd reducing the number of cattle to be sorted, when you are in the corner sorting off the remaining trash, when you are pushing the good cow to the fence. Always there, always doing the same thing - occupying the cattle's away side field of vision. The cattle or the isolated cow must concentrate on the pressure of the horse and rider. If you elect to get between your 4th partner and the cattle, you have added another avenue to escape from the pressure applied by the horse and rider. It is more difficult to control the herd or the good cow without your 4th partner.

REDUCE IN FRONT OF THE HERD - SORT IN THE CORNER. When you are in front of the herd, moving along the plane of the back wall, the majority of the herd falls behind as the rider maneuvers for position to cut the good cow, which in turn reduces the number of cattle to be controlled and sorted in the corner. Fewer cattle are easier to control, faster to sort and easier on your turnback riders.

CUT THE HEAD - PUSH THE HIP. Cattle respond to the pressure applied by the horse's head and body. Moving the horse's body closer to the cattle speeds them up - moving the body away will slow and stop them. The cow will turn away when the head of the horse moves ahead of the cow's head; the cow will squirt ahead when the head of the horse is at its hip. Use the horse's head and body like a weapon by applying pressure to force cattle movement.

CONTROL THE HORSE'S TAIL when you are in the herd. The back end of the horse moves cattle just like the horse's head - often with unintended consequences. Reduce the *tail pressure* by applying cow-side leg pressure to the horse. The leg pressure will angle the horse's hip away from the cattle when you are reducing the herd or when you are sorting the good cow. Tipping the horse's head toward the hip of the good cow and moving the horse's hip away eliminates the unintended consequences of the unmanaged pressure exerted by the hind quarters of your horse.

PUT THE GOOD COW ON THE FENCE and push to the pen - the horse's nose at the cow's hip, the horse's tail away from the cow. When the good cow is on the fence, it's clear sailing! One or two trash cows can be easily sliced off if the good cow is on the fence. On the other hand, if trash is on the fence the linesman can do one of three things - hope for a miracle, turn back everything or let the trash go.

- Put the cow on the fence
- Put the horse's nose on the cow's hip
- Apply leg pressure to the cow side of the horse
- Push the horse's tail away from the cow

STAGE THE COW near the wing of the pen.

STOP, check to make sure your cow stops moving and is looking toward the pen wall.

FILL THE OFF-SIDE TURNBACK POSITION as soon as possible.



THE CUT

THE CLEANER THE BETTER

Each trash cow reduces your chances of a successful run. A clean cut improves your odds of success AND it frees up the turnback riders to begin the next cut.

A clean cut has basic steps:

- Find your number before entering the herd
LOOK AT THE TOP & CORNERS FIRST
- Work in front of the herd
- Reduce the number of cattle before beginning the cut using the back wall to control the herd
- Enter the herd like there is no line man – disturb as few cattle as possible
FRESHER CATTLE - SLOWER PACE
- Sort off the remaining trash in the corner
- Isolate the good cow on the wall
- Put the horse's nose on the cow's hip
- Apply cow-side leg pressure
- Push the cattle past the top of the pen
- Return to the open turn-back zone or do your job at the pen

STAY QUITE UNLESS YOU'VE MADE A MISTAKE

TURNBACK

A team is disqualified when trash crosses the foul line. The job of the two turnback riders is to stop trash from crossing the foul line. The 1st rider to enter the herd occupies the center with turnback riders on either side when you begin the run. Turn back riders should spread out far enough to clearly see the numbers of the cattle on the edges. Speak the numbers you see on the edges to the 1st rider. There are two good reasons for spotting and speaking the numbers: the 1st cutter knows what is on each edge of the herd and on top; the number you spot may be near the same place for the 2nd cut if that cow is not taken by the 1st cutter.

WORK THE HERD - NOT THE FOUL LINE. RIDE UP! Both turnback riders must take control of the herd by working as close to the herd as possible without interfering with the cutter. **RIDE UP!** The biggest mistake you can make is to think you can guard the foul line. Once the trash builds up a head of steam, you couldn't stop them with a gun. **RIDE UP!**

THE DIRECTION OF THE CUT DETERMINES THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TURNBACK RIDERS. The turnback riders have distinct names and jobs to do once the number is called.

- On-side turnback: the rider on the cut side of the herd.
- Off-side turnback: the rider away from the cut side of the herd.

For example, if the cut is to the right, the turn-back rider in the right hand side of the arena becomes the on-side turnback rider. Conversely, if the cut is to the left, the turn-back rider in the left hand side of the arena becomes the on-side turnback rider.

OFF-SIDE TURNBACK RIDER

The off-side turnback position is the most demanding due to the number of cattle that must be controlled, the area and distance that must be covered. There are certain basics associated with the position.

THE OFF-SIDE TURNBACK RIDER HAS FIVE RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Work the herd – not the foul line.
- Stop trash from leaking up the off-side fence.
- Support on-side turnback rider. Turn back rolling cattle or trash that might leak up the center.
- Spot the next good cow to cut.
- Cut the next good numbered cow once the 1st cutter has cleared.

PRESSURE THE OFF-SIDE HERD TO THE BACK WALL WITH THEIR HEADS TOWARD THE WALL. The trash cattle are less likely to take off if they're not looking at the open end of the arena.

MOVE TOWARD THE CENTER OF THE ARENA, BEHIND THE ON-SIDE TURNBACK RIDER, AHEAD OF THE FOUL LINE. Keep the horse facing the herd with the nose tipped toward the on-side so that you can turn the cattle that are rolling across the center back into the off-side part of the herd. The off-side turn back rider needs three sets of eyes. One, to watch for the rolling cattle from the on-side of the arena; two, to watch for leakage up the fence because the trash returning to the herd applies pressure to the off-side cattle; three, to spot the next good cow to cut once the cutter is clear.

START SPOTTING THE NEXT CUT – FIND IT BEFORE ENTERING THE HERD.

CUT THE NEXT COW ONCE THE 1ST CUTTER IS CLEAR. Make sure you know where you are going before you enter the herd. Timing is critical – if you leave too soon, trash might leak – if you are too slow, precious seconds are lost. Enter the herd like there is no turnback rider. Your turnback help is coming, but, more than likely, your help won't be there right away. Tell you're partners that you're going in! Hopefully, your partners will have told you they are clear. Enter the herd like you don't have a turnback rider.

ON- SIDE TURNBACK RIDER

THE ON-SIDE TURNBACK RIDER HAS ONE JOB - TURN THE TRASH. Sounds easy doesn't it? The truth is, if the cutter is doing the job it is. ***Ride up – move on the trash as soon as possible.***

RIDE UP TOWARD THE HERD AND FOLLOW THE CUTTER. *Ride up* and stay in line behind the cutter. The cattle are trying to escape from the cutter's pressure, if you are too close to the on-side fence you could take away the cutter's lane to the pen. If the cutter is clean (no trash) get out of the way. Pay attention to the cut – you may need to help finish the cut by turning your horse toward the cut cow to help push the cow to the pen. Pressure any stragglers back to the herd, then go turnback for the off-side rider.

However ... the cattle have a say-so too! There are other possible situations:

THE HERD HAS NOT BEEN REDUCED. *Ride up* and roll the cattle toward center while the cutter keeps the good cow in the corner and on the wall (and hope the off-side turnback rider can turn them back to the wall). When (more likely – if) the good cow comes free, ride away (nose in - tail away) toward the center of the arena to open an avenue for the cutter, push any stragglers back to the herd, then go turnback for the off-side rider.

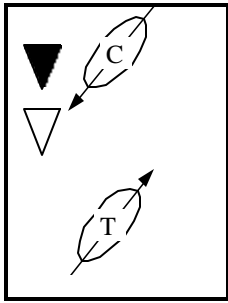
THE GOOD COW IS ON THE FENCE SIDE. *Ride up*, slice the trash and pressure them back to the herd (nose in - tail away), push any stragglers back to the herd, then go turnback for the off-side rider.

THE TRASH IS ON THE FENCE SIDE, AHEAD OF THE GOOD COW. Go to the wall, *ride up* directly at the trash and stop the cattle. Push any stragglers back to the herd, then go turnback for the off-side rider.

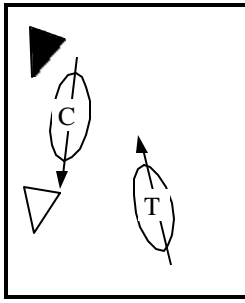
THE TRASH IS ON THE FENCE SIDE, BEHIND THE GOOD COW. *Ride away* (nose in - tail away) toward the center of the arena to open an avenue for the cutter. The cutter must stop the trash by pressuring the trash into the wall. Push any stragglers back to the herd, then go turnback for the off-side rider.

TURNBACK SITUATIONS

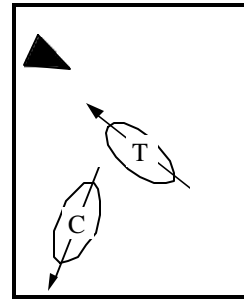
THE GOOD – Good cow ahead of trash cow.



- **Cutter** pushes the good cow to the fence, nose on the hip – tail away.
- **Cutter** forces the trash cow into the fence.

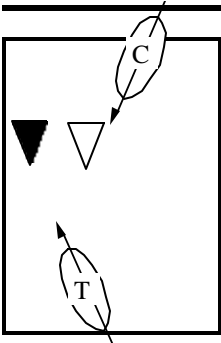


- **Turnback** rides away to open a lane to the pen.

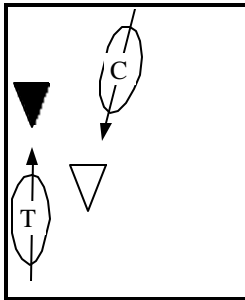


- **Turnback** moves away to open a lane to the pen.
- **Turnback** pushes trash back to the herd
- **Turnback** moves to support the next rider in or fills position going to pen.

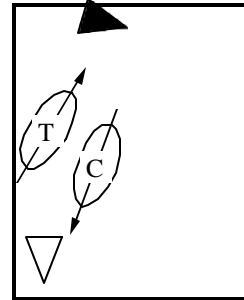
THE OK – Trash cow on the wall – even with the good cow



- **Cutter** pushes the good cow to the fence, nose on the hip – tail away.
- **Turnback** rides up directly at the trash cow.

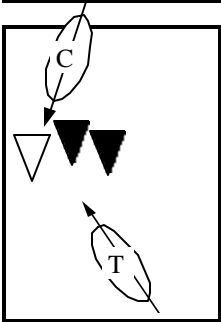


- **Cutter** pushes the good cow to the fence, nose on the hip – tail away.
- **Turnback** rides up directly at the trash cow with the horse on the wall.



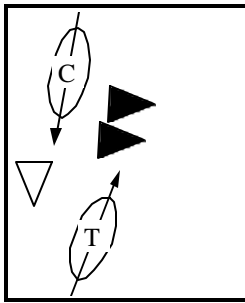
- **Cutter** pushes the good cow to the pen, nose on the hip – tail away.
- **Turnback** pushes trash back to the herd
- **Turnback** moves to support the next rider in or fills position going to pen.

THE OK – Good cow on the wall – trash inside

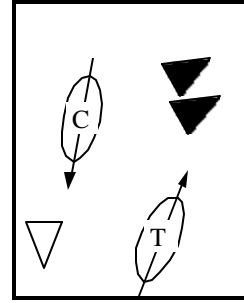


- **Cutter** pushes the good cow to the fence, nose on the hip – tail away.
- **Cutter** checks up to allow trash to split.
- **Turnback** rides up between the good cow and the trash to split the trash from the good cow.

split the trash from the good cow.

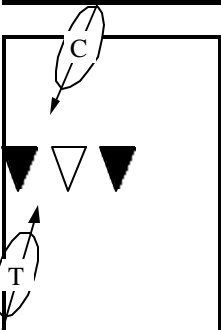


- **Turnback** rider turns trash away from good cow.
- **Cutter** resumes pressure on the good cow, nose on the hip tail away.

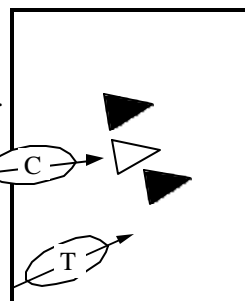


- **Cutter** pushes the good cow to the pen, nose on the hip – tail away.
- **Turnback** pushes trash back to the herd
- **Turnback** moves to support the next rider in or fills position going to pen.

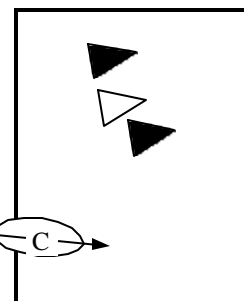
THE UGLY – Good cow between the trash



- **Cutter** STOPS AND BACKS UP to take away all of the pressure.
- **Turnback** moves to a position to try to turn this mess back to the arena.
- Hope for the best.



- **Cutter** move up to support turning the mess.
- **Turnback** hopefully turns the cattle so the off-side turnback can pressure the cattle back to the herd.
- **Turnback** stops.



- **Cutter** moves away from the turning cattle to relieve the pressure
- **Cutter** rides ahead of the turned cattle to start over.
- Everyone breathes a sigh of relief.

GOING TO THE PEN

The team is ready to go to the pen when the third cow is cut from the herd. At this point, it is a good idea to push any stragglers back to the herd - then you're off to the pen!

YOU ARE - WHERE YOU ARE. Do not cross in front of your partners.

- The rider nearest the pen side of the arena always controls the HOLE.
- The rider in the center controls the WING.
- The rider farthest from pen controls the SWEEP. Occasionally, the cattle do something that requires these sweep and wing riders to switch, but, it is the exception rather than the rule. If you must switch, tell your partner or you might have a wreck.

WAIT FOR YOUR PARTNERS. Be patient, it takes all three riders to pen the cattle. If one or two riders start too soon the cattle will see the opening and, more times than not, will make a break back to the herd.

FORM A LINE, SPREAD OUT EVENLY BETWEEN THE FAR WALL AND THE PEN. Stay spaced and in line until you reach the top of the pen. If the cattle see a break in your spacing or an uneven line, they will try to get back to the herd.

BE SURE THE CATTLE ARE LOOKING TOWARD THE PEN. The cattle are difficult to pen when they are looking back at the herd. Be sure all three cattle are turning their heads toward the pen before you begin pushing them toward the pen. You do not want to try to catch one that escapes.

AT THE PEN . . . Pay attention . . . DO YOUR JOB

HOLE. Timing - timing - timing. Make sure your partners have control of the cattle after you reach the top of the pen (because if they lose control you can catch the cow before it gets back to the herd). If your partners are in control, break to the top of the hole and wait for the cattle to turn the corner of the pen. You will be setting a trap for the cattle when the sweep rider pushes the cattle to you. Time your ride through the hole so that you arrive at the end just in time to turn the cattle to the opening in the pen. Too soon, you'll either turn the cattle into the wing or they will try to run by you. Too late, the cattle will already be on their way down the hole.

WING. Timing - timing - timing. Reduce the pressure on the cattle by slowing down. Make sure that the sweep rider is ahead of you and has control of the cattle before angling toward the wing area to start funneling the cattle, along with the sweep rider, toward the trap that is being set by the hole rider. Turn your horse to parallel with the wing of the pen, timing your ride to the opening of the pen with the cattle turning at the hole. You will probably push them in the pen, so don't forget to hold up your hand when they're in there!

SWEEP. Timing - timing - timing. Too much pressure and you'll blow the cattle right through the hole rider. Too little and the cattle will stall in the corner. Push the cattle hard until they begin to turn the corner but then you must check up to take the pressure off the cattle so the hole rider can turn them back to the opening in the pen. Step back toward the wing rider to pressure the cattle that are turning from the hole into the opening of the pen. You are the last line of defense at the wing if the hole rider pushes too hard - make sure you are in a position to support the wing rider. Help the wing rider push them in the pen. If the wing rider has trouble, you'll put them in the pen, remember to hold up your hand when they're in there!

NOISE IS A TOOL

There are teams that are quite as church mice; there are others that make enough noise to raise the dead! The truth is somewhere in the middle. Team members must communicate with one another, so there is a certain amount of chatter anyway. Whatever noise you make will scare the cattle and they will react – when ever you make noise – for better or worse. The more cattle affected – the louder the noise – the greater the reaction. Hootin’ and hollerin’ can become a habit which, if you’re not careful, can hurt more than it helps. On the other hand, it can be a tool to speed things up or help you recover from a mistake. Noise can be an effective tool when you or one of your partners need it!

INFLUENCING CATTLE WITH NOISE



MAKING NOISE IS A TOOL

Noise is one of the tools that help your team pen your cattle. Using noise can influence the cattle to do something different. Regardless of the noise, it spooks the cattle and, true to their nature, they will run away from the source of the fear. Like any good tool, it is important to know when to use it, when not to use it.

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING

Too much noise confuses the cattle. They can't run away from the noise because its everywhere! The cattle put their heads down and start to run – anywhere – and, more times than not, you will need a gun to stop 'em!

PARTNERS NEED THE TOOL TOO!

- When you're using noise, your partners can't – don't take the tool out of your partner's hand unless you need it!
- When you have control of the cattle, a well timed hoot might speed things up – or blow things up.
- When you have made a mistake, a well timed hoot might save you're bacon – or blow things up.
- Use the tool when you need it – don't overuse it!

USE THE TOOL CAREFULLY

A good rule of thumb is:

USE NOISE AS A TOOL – NOT A CRUTCH

When the cattle are doing what you want, stay quiet.

WELCOME ABOARD!

Team penning is one of the fastest growing equestrian sports in America – maybe the world – because it is fun! You will develop a style of your own soon enough as you discover what works for you – but the basics of the sport will always hold true. Mount up, do your job, have fun!