

MOVEMENT: UNDERSTANDING YOUR ANIMAL

We have spent a lot of time on feet, fetlock, knees, shoulders and back. To continue with the swinging back against the leg mover we have to understand the nature of the animal. First of all, note where his eyes are placed, on the side of the head looking out left and right. By nature he moves in the herd and with the herd and was always the prey never the predator: he looks for a way to put himself away from danger. In natural movement he swings his head from left to right, giving each eye the opportunity to see straight ahead. The best demonstration of this is a bullfight with a matador. The matador is standing in front carefully holding his cape, dropping it left to right alternatively, catching the attention of the bull through the corner of his eye. The bull can't focus easily because his eyes are being distracted alternatively. The crowd will think the matador is brave, while he is in the safest spot at that time. The bull charges, the matador steps left or right and the bull charges by. We know the end of the story.

The animal does what comes natural to him when he walks moving his head, shoulders and tail in a swinging motion, referred to as the swinging or supple back. This is the most comfortable movement and he can walk the greatest distance in this way. In a herd of cows he can move around for hours, doing what a bull does best, i.e. sniffing and touching. He is supple and comfortable with his body and movement. Eating and drinking is not a problem. He does not need to lie and rest as long as a leg mover with a rigid back.

We have been talking about what comes natural but human interaction can damage the natural thought pattern of the animal. By excessive use of a whip or prodder, a normally easy-to-work-with animal can become aggressive and show intolerance to work with people. I have seen that at the sale where the herdsman in the ring continue probing and prodding a walking animal, by the time the gate opened he was furious and the buyer will have to calm him and let him know that life is not so bad.

Last thoughts: use as much force as necessary to achieve your goal, but never excessive. While the animals are under your care, give them a good caring existence. They do not know that they are commodities.

Thanks!

Mike and Elmic Beefmasters.