

Tip of the Month – June 2018

Cow Whisperer.

In many places I am called the Cow Whisperer. Although it is an honor in itself, it's also non-sense of course. What is true though, is that I can usually get the cow to go where I want her to go.

I am not familiar with using a stick or screaming.

What does help is: Try to think like the cow. Because the cow in the new situation has to get out of her comfort zone to go somewhere she doesn't actually want to go. Like the first time she has to go to a milking robot. This also goes for moving to a new stall, new group, straw/ calving box, claw care box, etc.

This is why the cow looks around for possibilities to escape back to her safe environment. This is also deeply rooted in her instinct.

Hitting a cow (hand or stick or shocks) causes the cow to think about where it was hit (on her back or ass), instead of paying attention to where she needs to go.

Fences, preferably ones that move, make very clear to understand for the cow: It is impossible to go to the left and also impossible to the right!

By standing behind the cow and holding her tail firmly, she'll know she can't go back either.

Then I usually wait until the cow does see where she can, and has to, go. At that moment this is followed by a friendly but urgent push which is often sufficient. Working like this looks like it takes a bit more time, but it takes away a lot of stress from the cow and from you, the farmer.

And after all doesn't take more time (or power) at all.

The cow also will have better memories of her first visit and you'll understand what that's worth! The farmer will observe his/her cows experiencing the new situation in a peaceful manner which is healthier for the cow, but also for the farmer!

So also here: "If the cow could make her own choice, (between stick or fences) she knew what to do!"