

In this issue:

News briefs

Beef Cattle
Temperament

Online BQA Trainings

In-Person Events this
Spring:

Spring Cal-Pac Meeting
Blue Oak Field Day
2023 Range Camp



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News Briefs

Need support for flood damage or livestock losses?

USDA Farm Service Agency has a variety of programs available, including their Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) and their Emergency Assistance for Livestock (ELAP).

[Read more about the FSA disaster assistance programs here.](#)

California Climate-Smart Agriculture Survey for Ranchers

UC invites California ranchers to tell us about needs related to changing climate conditions and management.

Participating is a chance to...

- Ensure university science is useful
- Discuss practices and policies impacting your business
- Help communicate ranching priorities to agencies and legislature

[Click here to take the survey.](#)

At the end, you can choose to enter a drawing for a \$50 gift card.

Questions? Contact Leslie Roche, Cooperative Extension Specialist in Rangeland Management, lmroche@ucdavis.edu, or Jairo Diaz, Director of UC ANR Desert Research & Extension Center (para preguntas en español), jdiazr@ucanr.edu

Hair Whorls Predict Breeding Soundness and Temperament

By **Ralph Phillips (ret.)** and **Theresa Becchetti**, UCCE Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor for Stanislaus and San Joaquin Counties

Editor's note: The first part of this article was originally published 20 years ago, and the second part 10 years ago - but the information remains relevant, and interesting!

How many people sit down and think about the placement and shape of hair whorls on cattle? And how many people do you think would try to make a connection between the whorls and temperament? What about fertility?

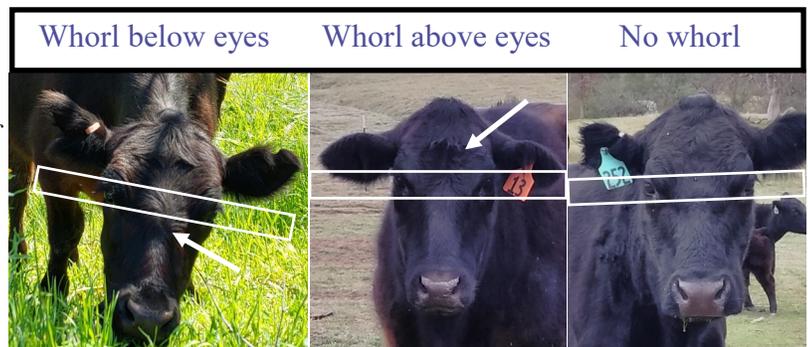
Well, believe it or not, someone has thought about these things, and more than that – has actually found a relationship between them. Dr. Temple Grandin, Associate Professor at Colorado State University has spent her career investigating cattle behavior and low stress handling techniques. She is known worldwide for her work and has been featured on 20/20, 48 hours, and Larry King Live, as well as in People, Time, US News, World Report and Forbes. She has been a supporter of properly designing facilities to easily and safely move cattle, reducing injury to animals and handlers.

In the past few years she has expanded her research program to look for predictors of temperament. Starting with a simple score card, she rated how cattle stood in the squeeze chute and found that if animals were either very calm or very agitated, they tended to display the same temperament each time they were processed, allowing producers to identify flighty animals and cull them. Then she started to look at physical characteristics of cattle. Dr. Grandin found that bone density could be a predictor of how flighty an animal is. Cattle with slender foreleg bones tended to be more flighty and ran out of the squeeze chute faster than cattle with thicker foreleg bones. In fact, the foreleg bone was 9% wider in the calmer animals. It is important to note that no Brahman cattle were part of this study, however.

Next came the whorl placement. Fifteen hundred feedlot cattle, including English breeds, European breeds, and some Brahman crosses, were examined for how agitated they were in the squeeze chute and hair whorl placement, or lack of, was noted. Dr. Grandin found that cattle with spiral hairwhorls located below their eyes tended to be calmer in the chute than cattle with whorls above their eyes, or even calmer than cattle without whorls. Dr. Grandin's group next moved this work into the auction ring. Again, cattle with hairwhorls above the eyes were flightier than cattle with hairwhorls below the eyes. There were no purebred Brahman in either study, and keep in mind that purebred Brahman are one breed that do not have hairwhorls.

At right: the cow with a whorl below her eyes is likely to be more docile than either of the other cows. White lines have been drawn to show the approximate zones of the face: above, between, or below the eyes. None of these cows has a whorl between her eyes. Photos courtesy of Rebecca Ozeran.

This article continues ►



*Livestock & Natural Resources Newsletter**Whorls continued*

It turns out that the placement is not the only interesting thing about hair whorls. The shape of the whorl has been related to breeding soundness of bulls. Angus bulls were separated into two groups based on either a circular whorl, or a crooked line whorl (see diagrams). It turned out that the group of bulls with a circular pattern were more fertile than the group with a crooked line. 83% of the circular whorl group passed the breeding soundness exam, while only 50% passed from the other group. This could add one more criteria in selecting replacement bulls.

If the section above sounds a little familiar, it might! UCCE Advisor Ralph Phillips printed this in 2003, and borrowed it from a fellow advisor serving San Joaquin and Stanislaus Counties, Theresa Becchetti. Since this study, further research has been done, as reviewed in the *Western Cowman* (Sep. 2011), into behavior and how docile cattle can pay off in the long run. Temperament can affect carcass quality, calf feedlot performance, pregnancy rates, disease resistance, potential injury to those handling the cattle, and owner frustration levels. The research says: **docile cattle perform favorably in all of the areas listed above and still do a good job of protecting their calves from predators.**

If you are interested in rating the excitability or relative docility of your cattle, it's pretty simple. First, you'll want to establish a rating process, for example, on a scale of 1 to 3, rate the degree to which a cow fights when she's in the chute. Then, also rate her speed as she exits the chute, again a scale of 1 to 3 could be used. The number 1 would represent a calm, docile cow that calmly walks away from the chute. The number 3 would represent a highly anxious cow who fights the chute, reacts each time she is touched (for injection, worming, ear tagging, mouth-ing, etc.) and exits the chute with an equestrian style jump and then dashes away. A number 2 cow would fall somewhere between a 1 and 3 rating.

Depending on your record-keeping methods while working cattle, adding this to the process may be as simple as adding a column or two to a spreadsheet or it could be more complex. As you consider how a rating system like this might work for your ranch, remember docile cattle can improve your bottom line, and spending just a few hours to implement a rating system could provide the extra advantage you need to make your operation even more successful and profitable.

Photo courtesy Rebecca Ozeran.



Beef Quality Assurance - Online Resources

The Beef Quality Assurance Program offers online courses for BQA and BQA Transportation certification, accessible 24/7.

BQA For Producers

These courses teach methods for raising your cattle in accordance with BQA fundamentals. Topics involve cattle health, stockmanship, marketing, emergency planning, and meat quality. With three classes available, you can choose one that relates to your operation.

- **Cow/Calf** - For those who breed and sell weaned calves
- **Stocker/Backgrounder** - For those who raise and sell feeder cattle
- **Feedyard** - For those who feed and sell fed cattle



Transportation

These courses teach proper methods for hauling cattle including cattle handling, fitness for transport, trip planning & loading, biosecurity, and emergency management. There are two courses offered:

- **Farmer/Rancher** - Emphasis on gooseneck trailers
- **Professional Driver** - Emphasis on commercial, semi trailers

Access the courses at:

bqa.org/beef-quality-assurance-certification/online-certifications



Joint RMAC and Cal Pac SRM Field Tour **May 8, 2023: Rancho Jamul & Hollenbeck Canyon**

Learn about targeted grazing as a vegetation management and fuels reduction strategy while incorporating conservation values into strategic management.

Join the Board of Forestry & Fire Protection's Range Management Advisory Committee (RMAC) and the California-Pacific Section of the Society for Range Management (Cal-Pac SRM) at this **FREE ALL-DAY WORKSHOP** to hear from representatives at the Department of Forestry & Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), Department of Fish & Wildlife, U.S. Geological Society, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, U.C. Berkeley, 4J Land & Livestock, Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego, UC Cooperative Extension, consultants, and more!

Bring Your Own Lunch. Coffee and pastries provided by the San Diego-Imperial Valley California Cattlemen's Association; afternoon lunch beverages provided by the San Diego County Cattlewomen.

Registration is Free!

www.eventbrite.com/e/joint-rmac-and-cal-pac-srm-field-tour-rancho-jamul-hollenbeck-canyon-tickets-616077804297



SIERRA-FOOTHILL
CONSERVANCY

Blue Oak Field Day
Saturday, June 3, 2023
Ruth McKenzie Table Mountain Preserve

NSF

neon
Operated by Battelle

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Agriculture and Natural Resources
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REI
CO-OP

Join UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE), Sierra Foothill Conservancy (SFC), and the National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) for a free field day on June 3, 2023, starting at 8:30 AM.

We welcome you to participate in a day of interaction with fellow land managers and landowners to discuss blue oak ecology and management in central California. UCCE, NEON, and SFC will lead the group in discussing management and monitoring practices that can enhance blue oaks and ecosystem processes. The results of a year-long blue oak study will be presented, and participants will have the opportunity to participate in blue oak monitoring methods. A free lunch will be provided, followed by self-guided hiking on McKenzie Preserve.

Register online at ucanr.edu/2023blueoaks by May 20, 2023.

Questions? Contact Rebecca at rkozeran@ucanr.edu or Billy at billy@sierrafoothill.org



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RANGE CAMP 2023

39th ANNUAL RANGE AND NATURAL RESOURCES
CAMP JUNE 18-23, 2023 - HALF MOON BAY, CA

Sessions and Activities include:

- Riparian Habitats
- Rangeland Ecology
- Wildlife Management
- Soils
- Forestry
- Plant Identification



- Recreation
- Private & Public Lands
- Watershed Hydrology
- GPS / GIS Technology Applications
- Tour of Working Ranch
- Team Project Planning Competition



Camp Cost: \$750 (sponsorships available)

All campers receive t-shirts and camp completion certificates.

Includes a "Top Camper" Contest

based on plant ID test score, subject matter exam score & staff evaluations

Top three placing students* given opportunity to represent California-Pacific Section, SRM at the Society for Range Management's High School Youth Forum, in Reno, NV February 2024 (all expenses paid for top two!).

**Must be a current high school student in Feb 2024 to participate in the Youth Forum*

More Information & Applications - DUE MAY 1, 2023

ucanr.edu/sites/rangecamp/

Camp Email:

range.camp@ucanr.edu

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