

“What to Look For in a “Good” Cow”

The following characteristics denote the behaviors of both a desirable cow to cut and an undesirable cow. Please note that all judgments should be based on how the cow acts when he is near a horse.

The “horse” could be:

- *A herd settler’s horse*
- *A show horse as in how individual cattle respond to a horse working in front of the herd*
- *A helper’s horse as he turns back or holds herd*
- *A show horse as cattle go back to the herd on a cut*

Desirable Behaviors

1. Interested in the horse and moves away from the horse easily

The cow sees the horse, pauses, looks and then walks on at an even gait. The more the cow looks back to “check out” the horse, typically the better the cow.

Avoid: A cow that moves quickly away from a horse and pushes aggressively through the herd. Also avoid a cow that allows a horse to get close to him without moving.

2. Appears “soft” in his body language

The cow appears relaxed and not “bothered” by the activity around him.

Avoid: A cow that is super alert, tight muscled, ears back, tail swishing and/or easily agitated by horses, people, movements or noises around him.

3. Keeps head and neck level everywhere he travels

The cow keeps an even top line when he moves around.

Avoid: A cow that is high headed or extremely low headed.

4. Travels everywhere at an even pace.

The cow moves at a steady gait.

Avoid: A cow that darts anywhere or moves sporadically.

5. Is comfortable at the front of the body of the herd as a horse works in front of him.

The cow is interested in the activity of the horse working in front of the herd as demonstrated by remaining at the front of the herd and watching the horse as he works.

Avoid: A cow that remains close to the back fence, seeks the back fence or does not want to drive out.

6. Is comfortable alone (without the comfort of the herd).

The cow doesn't mind standing by itself during settling or remains out front after another cow has been cut (and has to be returned to the herd by a helper.)

Avoid: A cow that is uncomfortable by himself, that is never alone or that runs back to the herd quickly on a cut.