

Video Shooting Pen Guidelines

Help & Labor

Have at least three helpers on shooting day, one on each side of the pen and one always bringing cattle to the pen. These helpers should be experienced in handling cattle, and careful about being overly loud or hurrying the cattle. At the same time, there should always be an animal ready to come into the pen to be certain that we are efficient in our time management. For example, if you hope to shoot 120 head in a day, but have to wait 1 minute for each animal to be brought in, that “down time” amounts to 2 hours-which means time is being wasted that could have been used for shooting or finishing the day earlier. The help needs to also understand the goals of shooting (alert, walking footage)-with clear direction of how the cattle will move through the pen. They should also be coached on how to assist the videographer with obtaining tag numbers for video IDs.

Pen Footing

Set your pen or select a pre-existing pen that is as level as possible, with a smooth ground surface to minimize animal stumbling. A flat pen allows the videographer to shoot footage with the animal going in each direction, which creates less time for that animal in the video pen (and stress) and provides a better perspective of the animal. Mowed grass is the most eye-appealing footing, but straw, shredded hay or shredded cornstalks work well to cover dirt and add eye appeal. If you use any of these coverings, be sure they are not too deep (9 inches or less) which may impede the animals walking. A dirt footing is not a major issue, as the viewer’s eye will be more on the animal moving, and not as much on the background or footing.

Pen Layout

The videographer will always shoot with the sun at their back, so plan for them to shoot facing the Northwest in the morning, straight North in the mid part of the day, and the Northeast later in the day. This minimizes shadows on the animal, which detract power and eye appeal from the subject. Plan on the pen being at least 60 feet long or greater in **length**, realizing that the longer the pen, the longer the video clip, and the more likely the animal is to stride out comfortably straight down the pen. This is another reason why it’s important to have two helpers in the pen, so one can work on each side “ping ponging” the animal back and forth. Also plan on the **depth** of the pen to be at least 60 feet or greater- this keeps the videographer out of the animal’s flight zone, which again aids in a comfortable walk for the animal down the pen with no distractions.

Square Corners

Generally most pens that we work in have square corners, which is ok. By properly handling the animals prior to them reaching the video pen, you shouldn’t have issues with the animals hiding in these corners or trying to jump out of them. If you do round the corners, do not round the whole pen, as that minimizes the amount of time that a true walking profile can be filmed. In these cases you have more of a rear three-quarter shot, profile, and then front three-quarter.

Video Shooting Pen Layout



Clear area, to allow uncluttered backdrop
60 feet long, preferably greater →

Cattle that have been shot

Out Gate



Videographer

60 feet deep or more



Cattle that are waiting to be shot

In Gate

