

Why Sheep Do What They Do.... Not what we want them to do



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Behavior and Handling

Fact Check: Sheep are stupid!?

Sheep foil cattle guard

Hungry sheep on the Yorkshire Moors (Great Britain) taught themselves to roll 8 feet (3 meters) across hoof-proof metal cattle grids to raid villagers' valley gardens. According to a witness, "They lie down on their side or sometimes their back and just roll over and over the grids until they are clear. I've seen them doing it. It is quite clever, but they are a big nuisance to the villagers." [Source: BBC News, July 2004]

I'll always remember ewe

A study of sheep psychology has found man's woolly friend can remember the faces of more than 50 other sheep for up to two years. They can even recognize a familiar human face.

Researchers say, "Sheep form individual friendships with one another, which may last for a few weeks. It's possible they may think about a face even when it's not there." The researchers also found female sheep had a definite opinion about what made a ram's face attractive

"A-mazing" sheep

According to researchers in Australia, sheep can learn and remember. Researchers have developed a complex maze test to measure intelligence and learning in sheep. Researchers have concluded that sheep have excellent spatial memory and are able to learn and improve their performance. And they can retain this information for a six-week period.

Self-medicating sheep

New research is suggesting that sick sheep could actually be smart enough to cure themselves. Australian researchers believe that sick sheep may actually seek out plants that make them feel better. There has been previous evidence to suggest that animals can detect what nutrients they are deficient in and can develop knowledge about which foods are beneficial or toxic.



Livestock, like all grazing species, are prey animals. Humans are predators. This means livestock spend their life being “hunted”, while we are traditionally the “hunter”. This makes everything about us different.

Prey animals have
two main motivators:

Food and Fear



Animals do not think
They react!

Wild Instincts:

Flee

or

Fight

When threatened sheep will turn and face the threat then flee as a flock.





Strong Herd Instinct



Sheep do not like:

- Walking downhill
- Walking on wet surfaces
- Changes in footing
- Walking towards solid walls







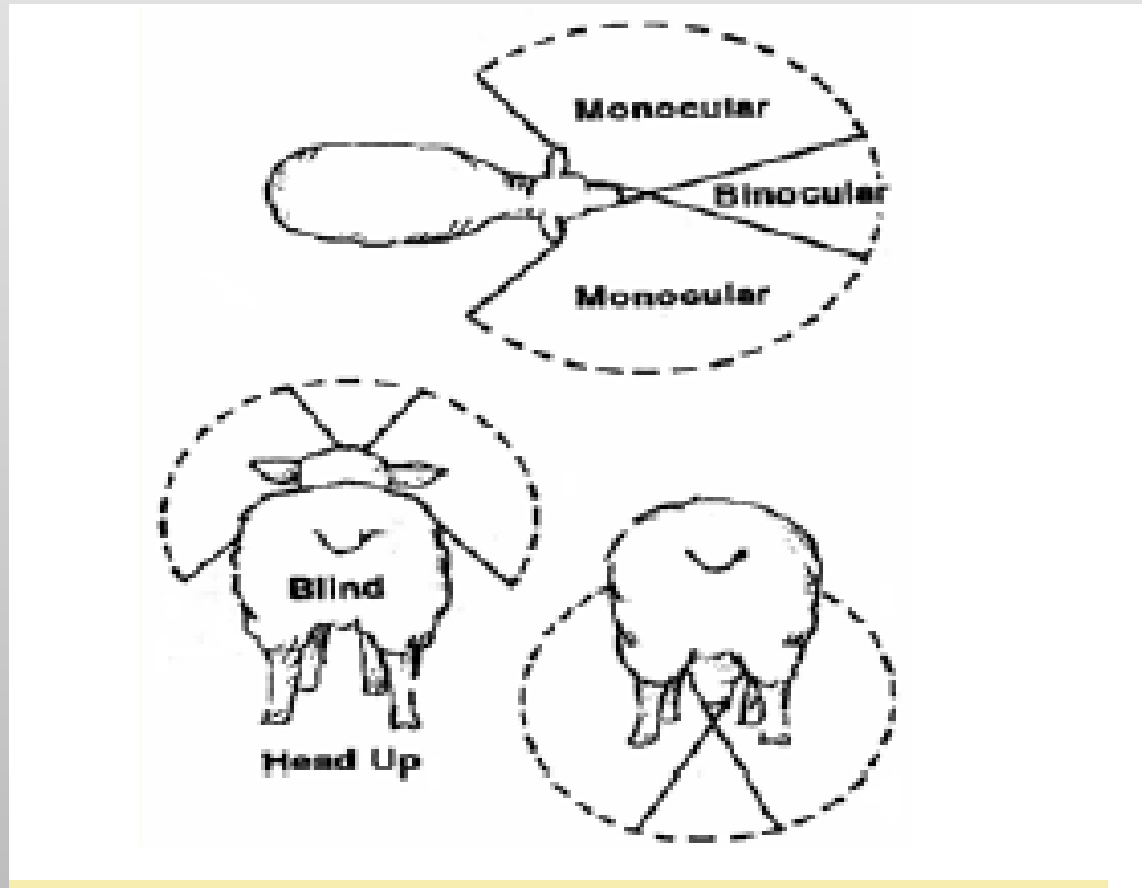
grandin.com

“Flight Zone”



Visual Contact

Range of Vision



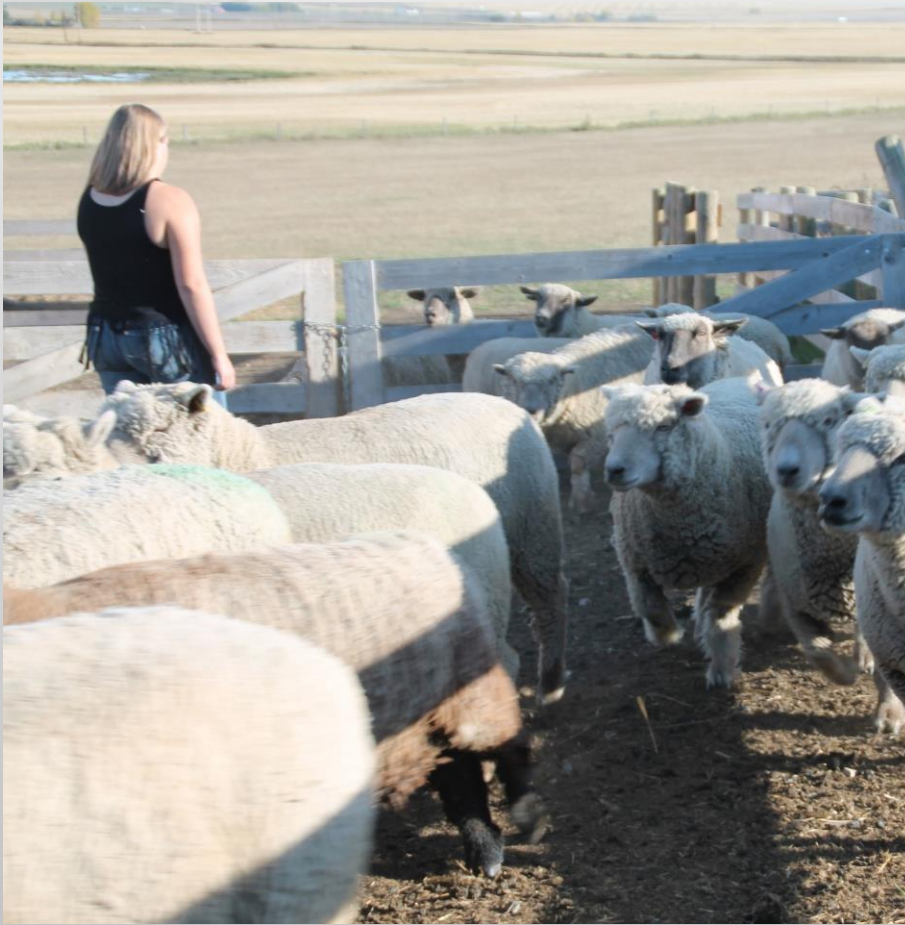




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The size of the flight zone can be affected by:

- Amount of contact with people
- Quality of human contact
- Genetics
- Familiarity
- Offspring
- Current environment

Most common mistakes.....

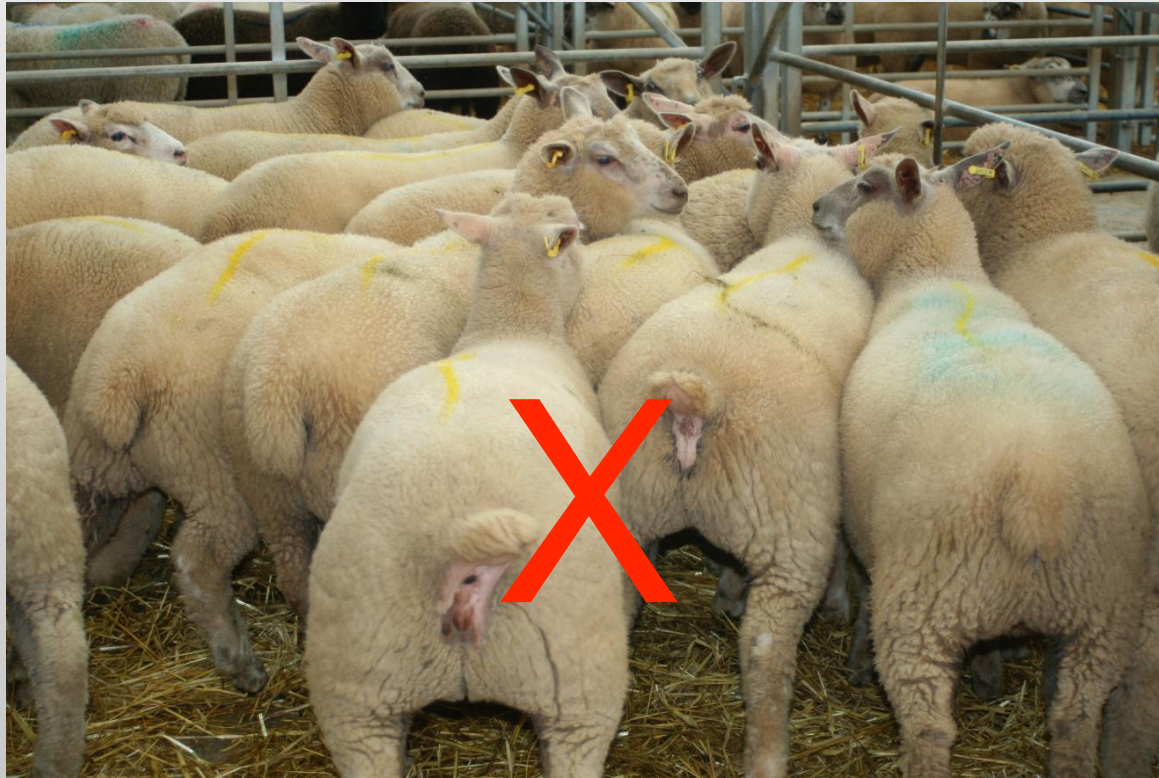
- ➔ going too deep into the flight zone,
- ➔ exhibiting too much predatory behavior,
- ➔ moving too many animals at one time,
- ➔ trying to control flock movement by the animals at the back
- ➔ trying to rush movement.

Minimize predatory traits by restricting aggressive behaviour including:

- ➔ yelling
- ➔ rapid movement
- ➔ striking
- ➔ crowding
- ➔ getting too close







You cannot control flock movement from the back of the flock



**Lead animals control flock movement -
work in smaller groups**

If you have 15 minutes to move
sheep, it will take you an hour.

If you have an hour to move sheep, it
will take you 15 minutes

When working with animals.....

- ➔ Make sure you have enough time for the task
- ➔ Do not intentionally run them,
- ➔ Allow them time to check out their surroundings



Craig Richardson, OMAFRA



OMAFRA

Leading Cause of Carcass Damage in Sheep is Wool Pulling

Electric
Prods are
NOT effective
on sheep



Craig Richardson, OMAFRA



THagedorn, AARD

Facilities

**Sheep are very sensitive
to the
contrast of light and
dark.**





Facilities should be designed in a manner that sheep are able to maintain visual contact with the animals ahead of them.





Do not overcrowd tubs

Temple Grandin



Handling your Rams

Bottle raised rams will grow up to be aggressive dangerous rams

Rams (including lambs) must not ever butt or paw for attention, or press their heads against you, or push another sheep out of the way in order to dominate your attention.

A ram should never live alone. In the boredom of isolation from other sheep, rams will find ways to take out their frustrations by bashing buildings, butting people or other animals, jumping over or destroying fences, etc.

Do not pet a ram on the top of his head....they can consider this a challenge and it tends to make them butty. Rams should always be “chin up”.

Never strike a ram...he may consider this a provocation, especially if one hits them on or about the head. They will few this in the same way as another ram challenging them.

A ram must never approach a human with his head down, and should not “bob” his head. He must never back up, and feint a charge (as young ones do with the older rams).

Jumping up on people should never be allowed as a lamb.

A ram should not enter the shepherd’s comfort zone without being invited. If he does approach the shepherd, the ram must stand quietly, and wait for a pat or a word.

Be aware of what the ram is doing at all times. When entering the ram’s pen or pasture, it is a good idea to keep him in your field of vision.

To exert dominance over a ram, roll him over on his butt and back.





Ram Shield



- **A ram should always move away from you when asked to do so.**
- **Ideally, a ram should not enter the shepherd's comfort zone without being invited. If he does approach the shepherd, the ram must stand quietly, and wait for a pat or a word.**
- **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD A RAM LIVE ALONE.** In the boredom of isolation from other sheep, rams will find ways to take out their frustrations by bashing buildings, butting people or other animals, jumping over or destroying fences, etc. Wethers make excellent companions, but we recommend having more than one when keeping a single ram.
- **NEVER** pet a ram on the top of his head....they can consider this a challenge and it tends to make them butty. Rams should always be "chin up".
- **Be aware of what the ram is doing at all times. When entering the ram's pen or pasture, it is a good idea to keep him in your field of vision.**
- **Never strike a ram...he may consider this a provocation, especially if one hits them on or about the head. They think: "This human is fighting like a ram....and well, it doesn't hurt that much"...so the uppity ram becomes even more interested in the confrontation.**
- **In breeding season, never use just a single fence to separate rams from ewes, or from other rams. For breeding pens, the perimeter should be made of a solid material, so that**

Sheep must never be....

- ➔ Kicked
- ➔ Struck
- ➔ Slammed by or in gates
- ➔ Injured by handling equipment or facilities
- ➔ Intentionally abused in any way during handling

For more information on animal care



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