

## 6. Things Affecting How the Stock Move

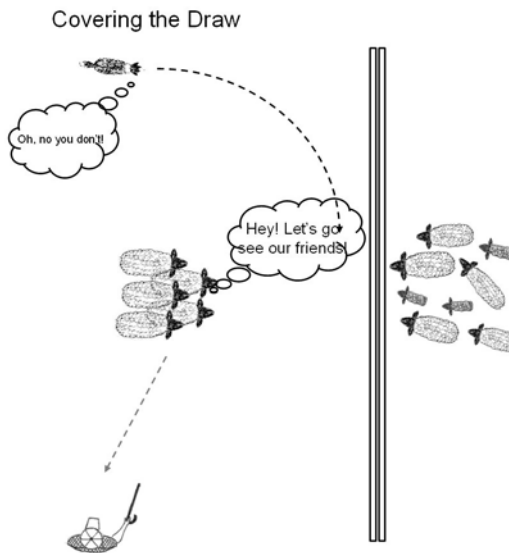
### Draw

There are several things that can affect the way the stock move that have nothing to do with the dog. But since these things affect how the stock moves, they can affect how your dog works, or what your dog needs to do to compensate. The first and probably most important is what is called the *draw*. The draw is the place where the stock want to go, or where they are drawn to. So, for instance, suppose you have a group of sheep, who, for whatever reason, are on one side of a fence and another group on the other side. If you are trying to take only one group somewhere, they will, of course, not want to leave their "friends" on the other side of the fence.

Or maybe the sheep are used to being put up at night in a particular pen, and that's where they get fed. They will have a draw to that pen, to some degree, pretty much all the time. Certainly if you have recently weaned lambs or calves, there is a great draw between the mothers and their offspring, particularly if they are within sight of each other. Even range ewes, brought to a new location for a trial, will develop draws pretty quickly. The pen where they are overnighed will be a draw, certainly. When each group of five head is taken out of the holding chutes to be used for the next competing dog, those groups, particularly early on the first day of competition, will want to head right back to the *setout* pens they were just taken from, where the other sheep are waiting their turns. Once they've been used once, they are put into an *exhaust* pen at the opposite end of the field, which, by the second day of the trial,

becomes another draw.

When dealing with a strong draw, your dog will need to *cover* that draw; in other words, if you send the dog to gather stock, and there is a strong draw to your right as the stock are coming toward you, the dog will need to be over on that side in order to bring the stock on a straight line to you, as in the following:



So this is a case where the stock may not necessarily move in a direct straight line away from the dog. In this example, if the dog were directly behind the stock, they would drift closer and closer to the draw as they progressed down the field. This is also where it becomes clear that "balance" for the dog, relative to the handler and the stock, isn't always necessarily at 12:00. While 12:00 may be the easiest way to conceptualize balance in the beginning, balance is merely wherever the dog needs to be in relation to the stock to be in a position to

bring them to the handler in as straight a line as possible. When you have a strong draw, and the dog positions itself properly to bring the stock to the handler, this is a fine example of a dog who is able to read and feel the stock and respond appropriately. This type of dog is a definite advantage. A dog with less training or less "feel" for its stock will require that you direct him or her to compensate for that draw.

### Weather

The weather can certainly affect how your stock move, as well, and as the weather changes throughout the day, so can the movement of your stock. For instance, when it is cool in the mornings, most stock are generally fresher, meaning they move more readily, more quickly. So in this case, the dog would need to stay farther back off the stock and not push much. As the day heats up, stock may become much more difficult to move, particularly cattle. Some cattle will need to be pushed pretty hard to keep them moving during the hottest part of the day, particularly if it is muggy. On days with high winds, especially if that is not a regular occurrence in your area, a lot of stock will be flightier, sheep in particular. The winds seem to kind of get them "stirred up" or even make them a bit nervous. So on windy days, your dog might need to be ready for sheep to suddenly dash off in some random direction.

### Young'uns

Of course, livestock with young pose a very particular problem, as they can become very distrustful of a dog they may know and respond to very well the rest of the

year. Usually, a momma and her young will hang to the back of the group, or even stay a ways off by themselves, particularly when the young are very new. So when you send your dog to gather them, they may not want to cooperate very much at all. In fact, the momma may very well charge your dog. A dog who understands how much pressure to put on the momma, without putting on *too much* pressure, is a valuable dog, indeed. As the lambs or calves get older, the mother will usually become more comfortable being part of the group once again.

Some people might think it's a good idea not to try to move youngsters with dogs, as that might cause more problems than it is worth. In fact, I know someone who told me that one year, they intentionally did not use the dogs at all on their cows during calving, so as to not "worry" them. But when it later came time to move those calves for vaccinating and other work, they created no end of trouble, as they were not used to the dogs. If mommas and their young are moved *appropriately*, that is, calmly and quietly by a dog who exhibits patience, when the young are very small, they just get used to being moved by the dogs, and learn to move off of them as part of their regular routine. As they become older, they are much more manageable, and they are managed with much less stress by using the dogs than they would be without. So the bottom line is that just as your dog becomes used to moving different types of stock, and can adjust accordingly, your stock will also become adjusted to being moved by a dog.