

What if trampers encounter livestock?

Twenty trampers recently came across a scenario I have witnessed a few times before: a mob of beef cattle.

Hill country beef cattle are not used to groups of people on foot. The people they do see are usually alone, and on a horse or quad bike. A mob of people frightens them.

Give the cattle room and choices of exit. Don't split them by walking through the middle. They will become agitated and make panicky decisions trying to get back together. This might be through the middle of the trampers - a tonne and a half of beast would make a mess.

The mob we met ended up on a no-exit track at a gate, hemmed in by a high bank on one side and an even higher cliff into the river on the other. I called the trampers back and told them to climb up a bank off the track. I climbed further up and over a ridge so I could come down in front of the mob and turn them gently back down the track.

When allowing livestock to pass, give them plenty of room, stay well off the track, keep low, and no talking. Don't stare, it makes them nervous (predators eye their prey before the kill).

Our group continued to chatter and move about. This caused a few cattle to rush over a steep bank to get past. If any had slipped, they could have been killed (at \$1000+ each). There goes our club credibility and permission to do these farm tramps.

Don't let common sense be in short supply. Remember – we are guests by the goodwill of the farmer.

Ray Walton