

The cow: How a cow sees the world



Desired outcomes

At the end of this module, you will:

- Understand that cows see the world differently from us, not just visually but with all their other senses.
- Be able to use this information to make stock handling easier for you and less stressful for the stock.

Cows see things differently from us

A cow's vision is completely different from a human's vision.

Understanding that will help us to understand what makes them frightened or uncertain: where their blind spots are, for instance, and what they can and can't see.

Give your cows time, when moving around the farm, to process what is happening around them. A cow's field of vision is much greater than ours.

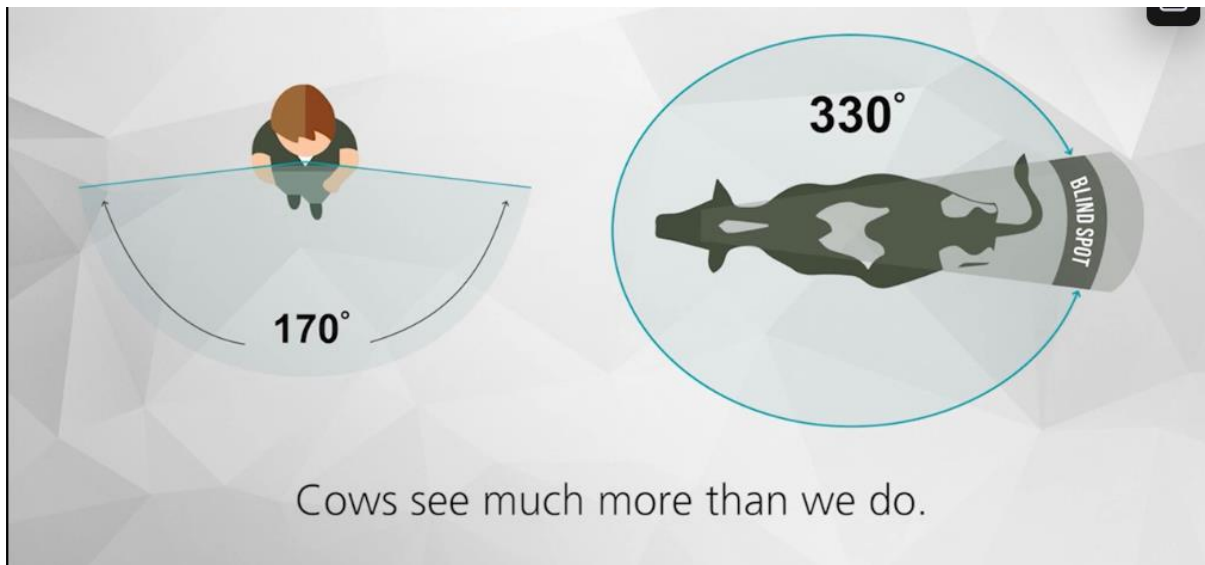


Fig. 1: A cow's field of vision is much wider than ours, but notice their blind spot

However, they only have a small area of binocular vision in front of them. Binocular vision is what we use to judge distance and depth, so while humans can judge these very well, cows cannot judge them well at all.

This means you should give them time to work out any changes in surfaces, and don't push them to move too quickly.

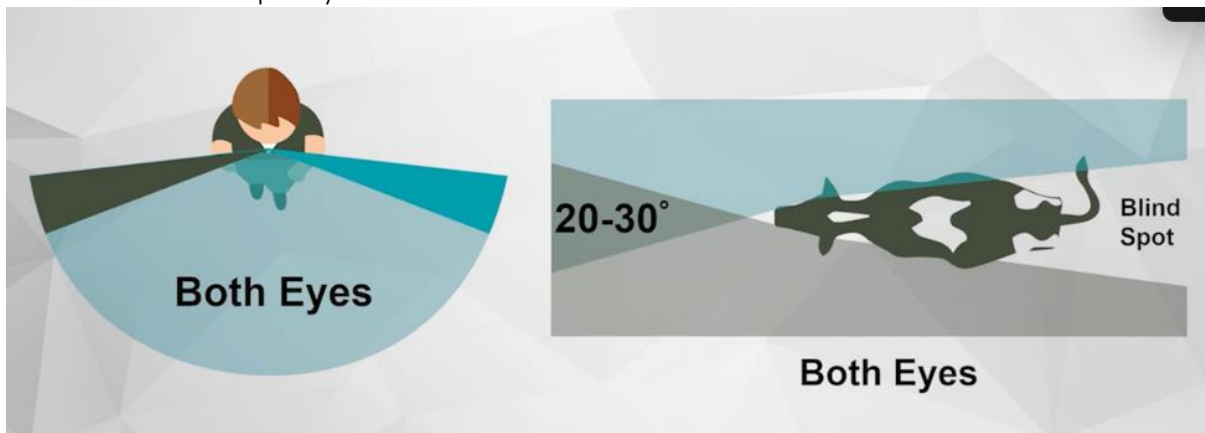


Fig. 2: Cows only have a very small area of binocular vision, directly in front of them

Unlike us, cows have to look down to see the ground. Since they have much less vertical vision than we do, give them time to navigate changing ground conditions.



Fig. 3: Cows can't see the ground unless they look down

Cows also see movement very differently from us. Our minds blur images together so we see fluid motion. When cows see rapid movement, they see a series of jerky images. This means they find such movements very threatening. So try to keep your movements calm, slow and deliberate.

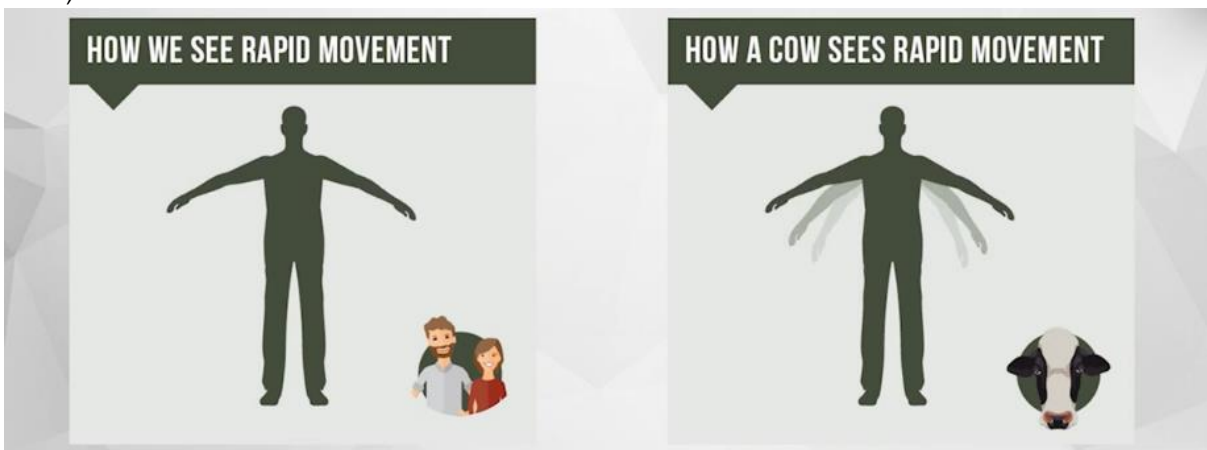


Fig. 4: We see rapid movement as a fluid motion, but cows see jerky and frightening images

Cows also have more sensitive hearing than we do, and don't like high-pitched or loud noises. So avoid shouting or whistling when moving cows, and try to keep the shed noise down. Cows also need more time than us to locate and identify the source of sounds. In fact all their senses – their hearing, smell/taste and sense of touch – are different from ours.