



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

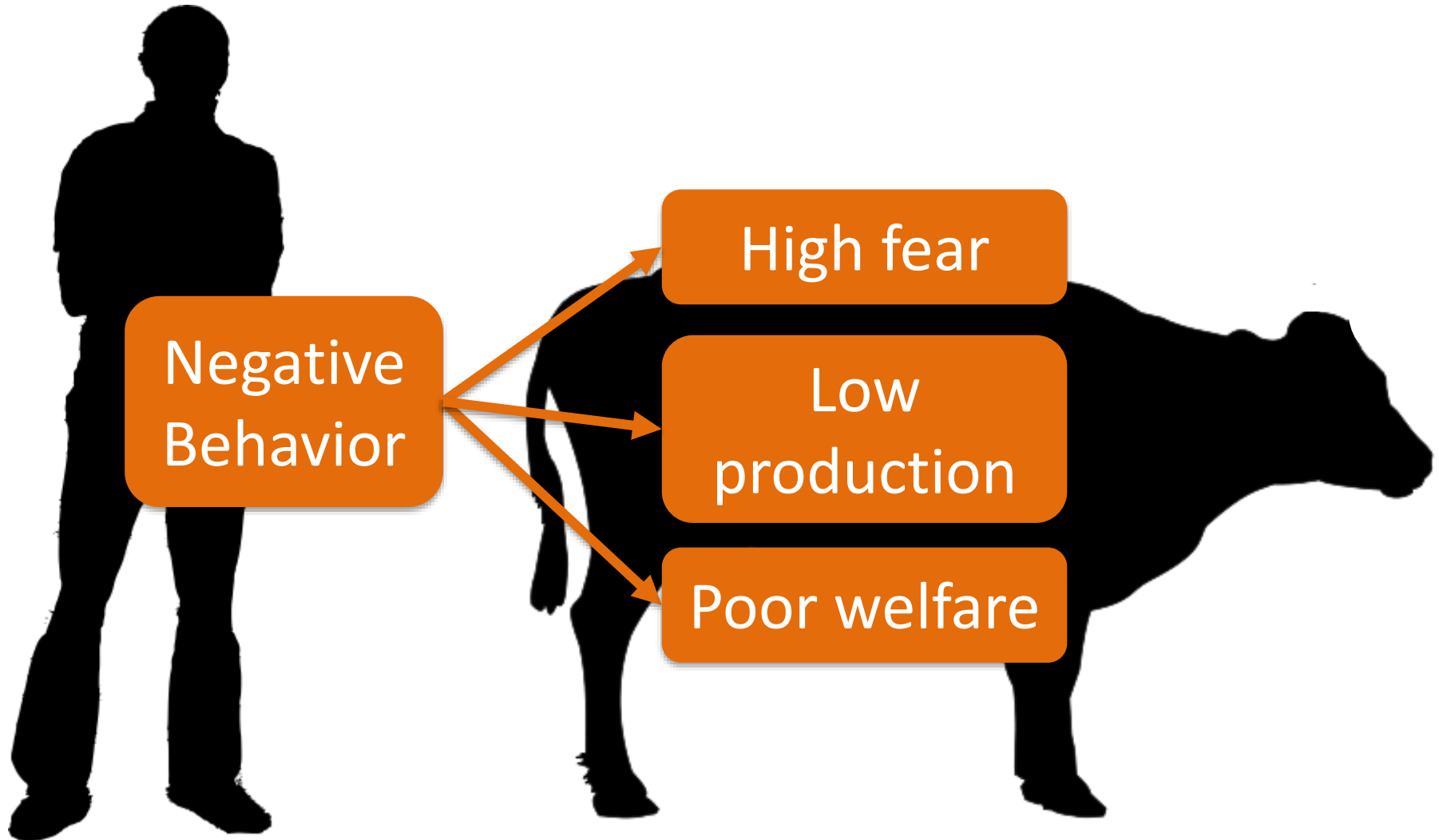
The Importance of Good Handling Skills for Dairy Cows

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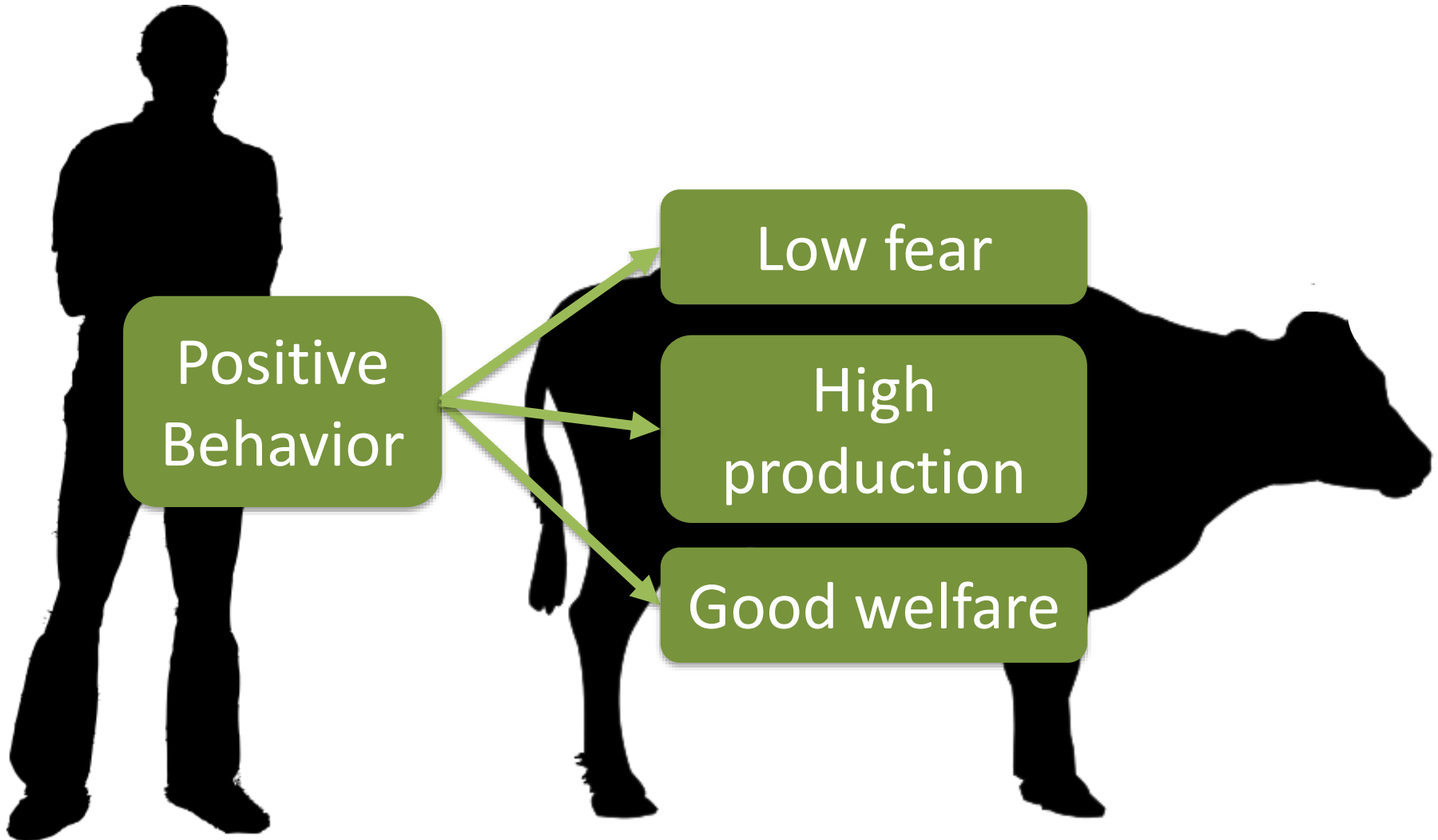
The plan

- Why good handling skills are important
- From the cow's perspective
- What to look for on-farm
- When to intervene

Handlers behavior and animal welfare



Handler behavior and animal welfare



Handler behavior and animal welfare



POSITIVE behavior

Gentle touching
Gentle stroking
Soft talking
Slow movements

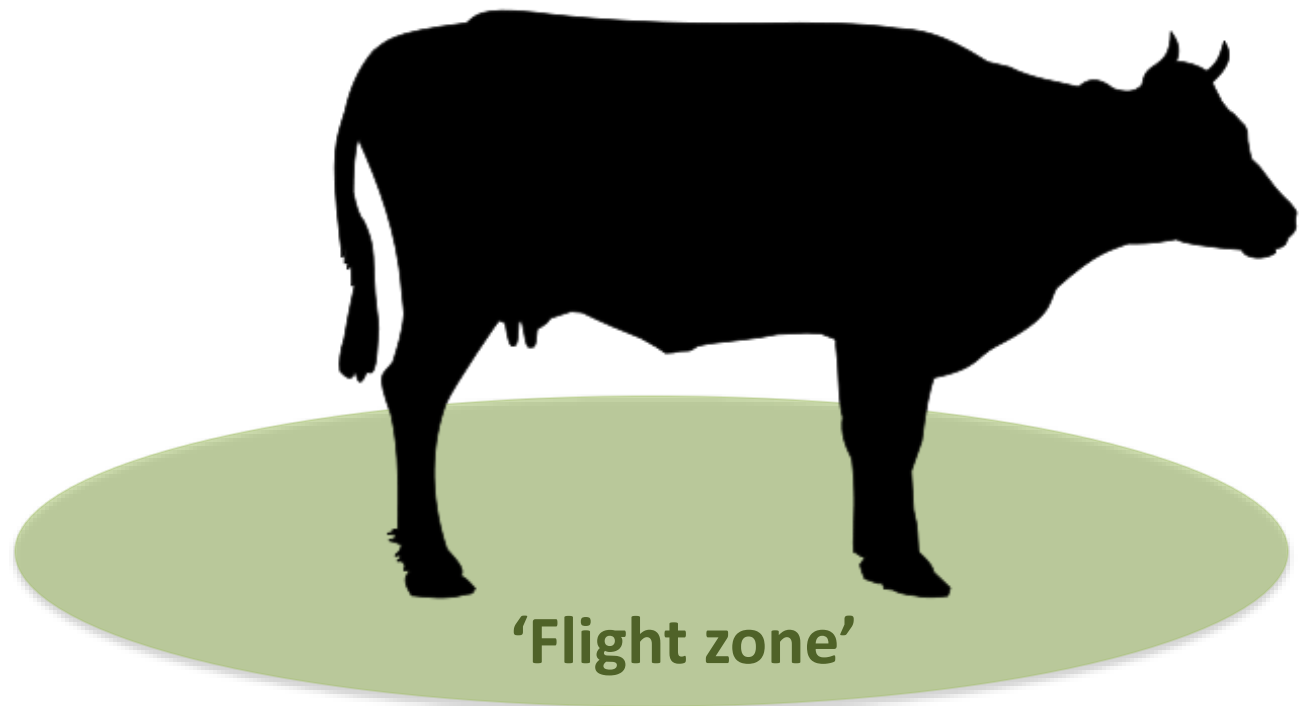
NEGATIVE behavior

Slapping
Pushing
Hitting with object
Using prod
Tail-twists
Loud yelling
Abrupt movements

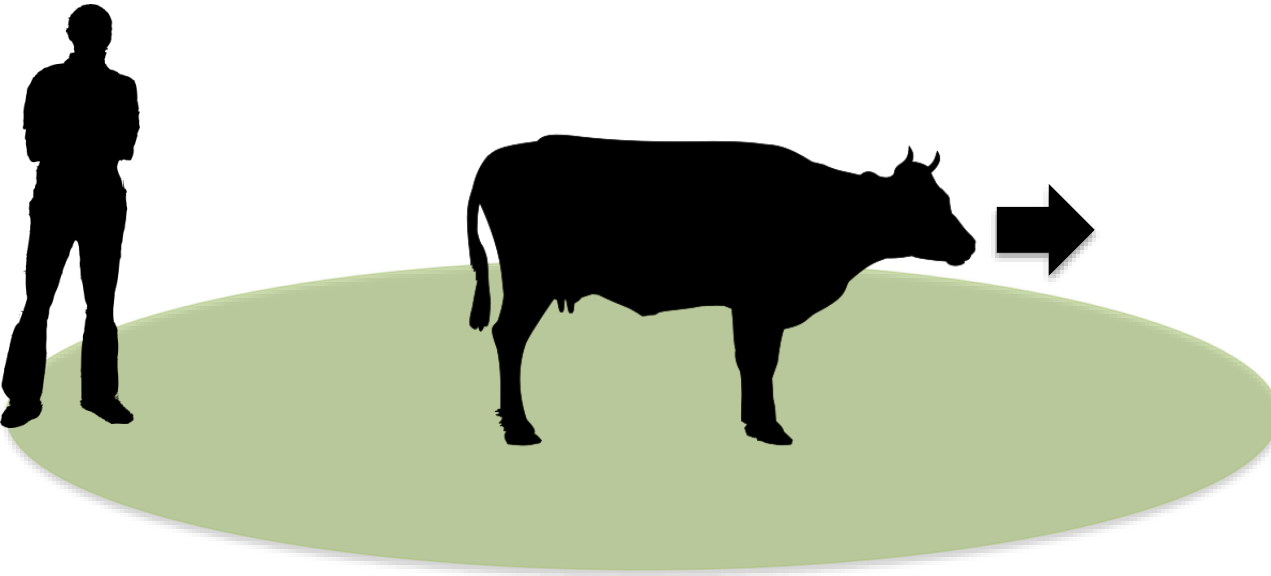
From the cow's perspective



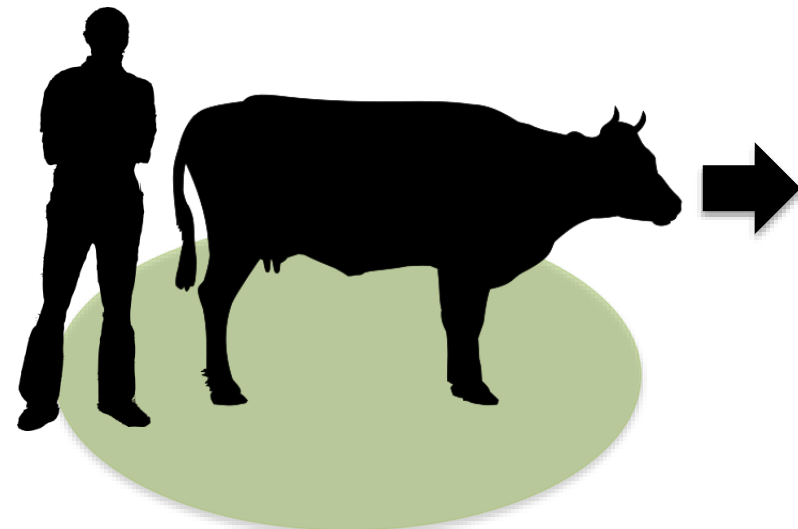
Flight zones



What does flight zone tell you?

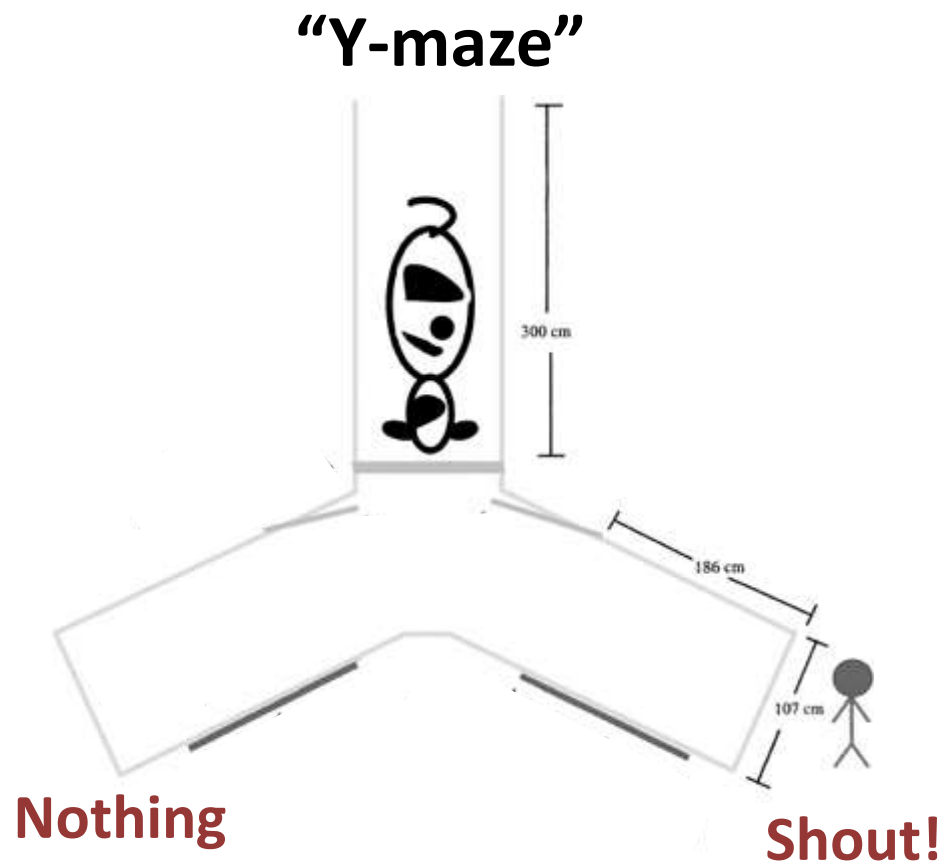


VS

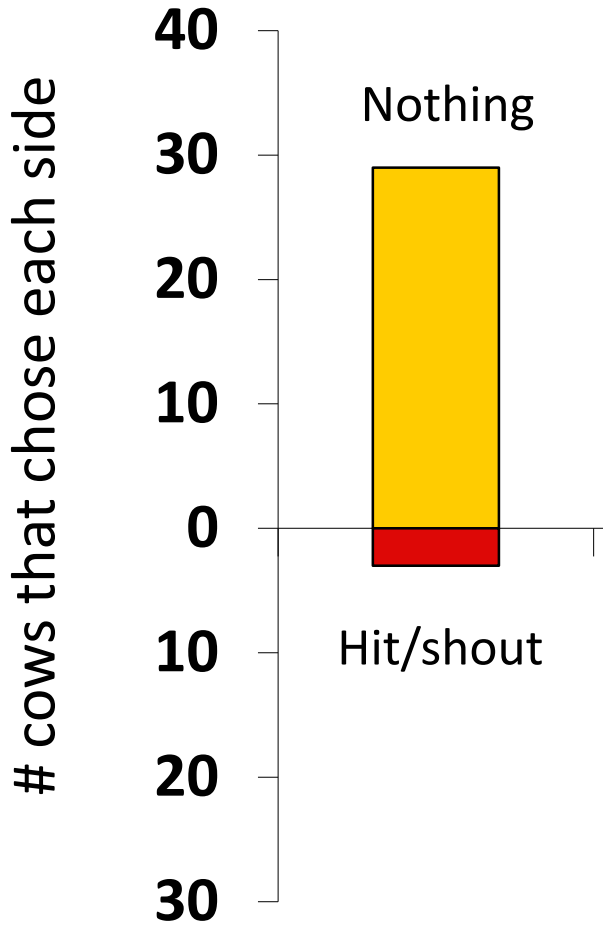


What causes fear and aversion?

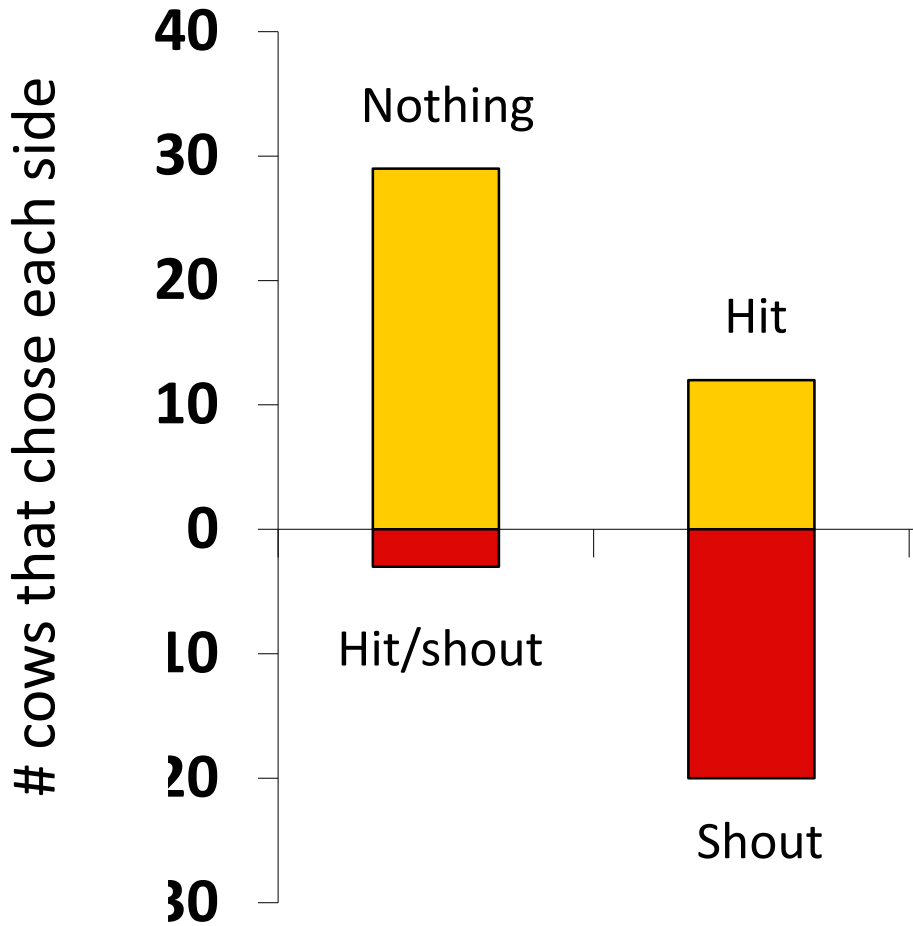
Give cows the choice between two handling techniques, and see which they AVOID



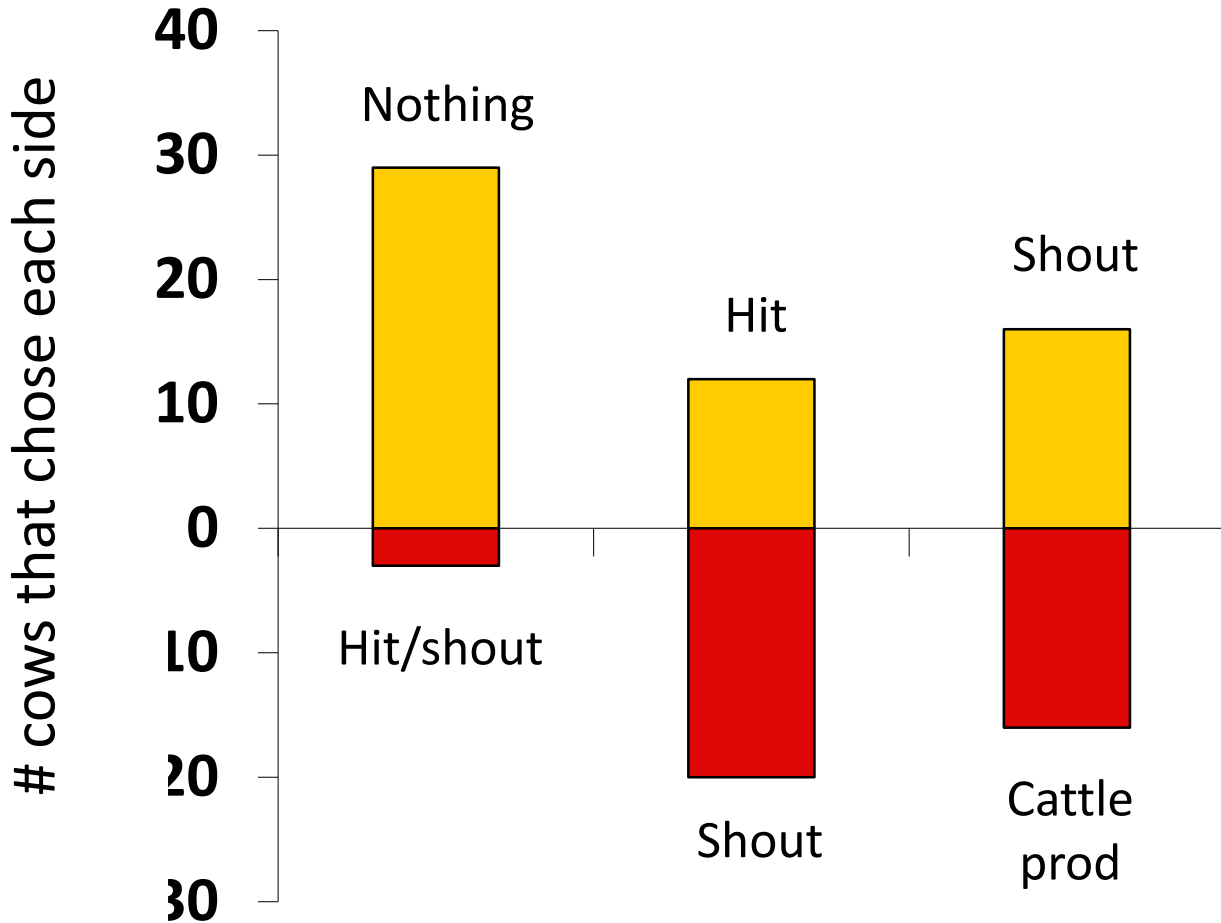
What do they choose?



What do they choose?



What do they choose?



Shouting is as aversive as an electric shock

Negative handler behavior

1. Handlers either behaved positively or negatively with cows
2. Brought cows into parlor
3. Each handler came into parlor
4. Measured physiological stress response of COWS

Negative handler behavior

- Cows showed stress response when negative handlers entered the parlor
- Cows can recognize people, and can remember who treats them negatively



How do cows recognize people?



How do cows recognize people?

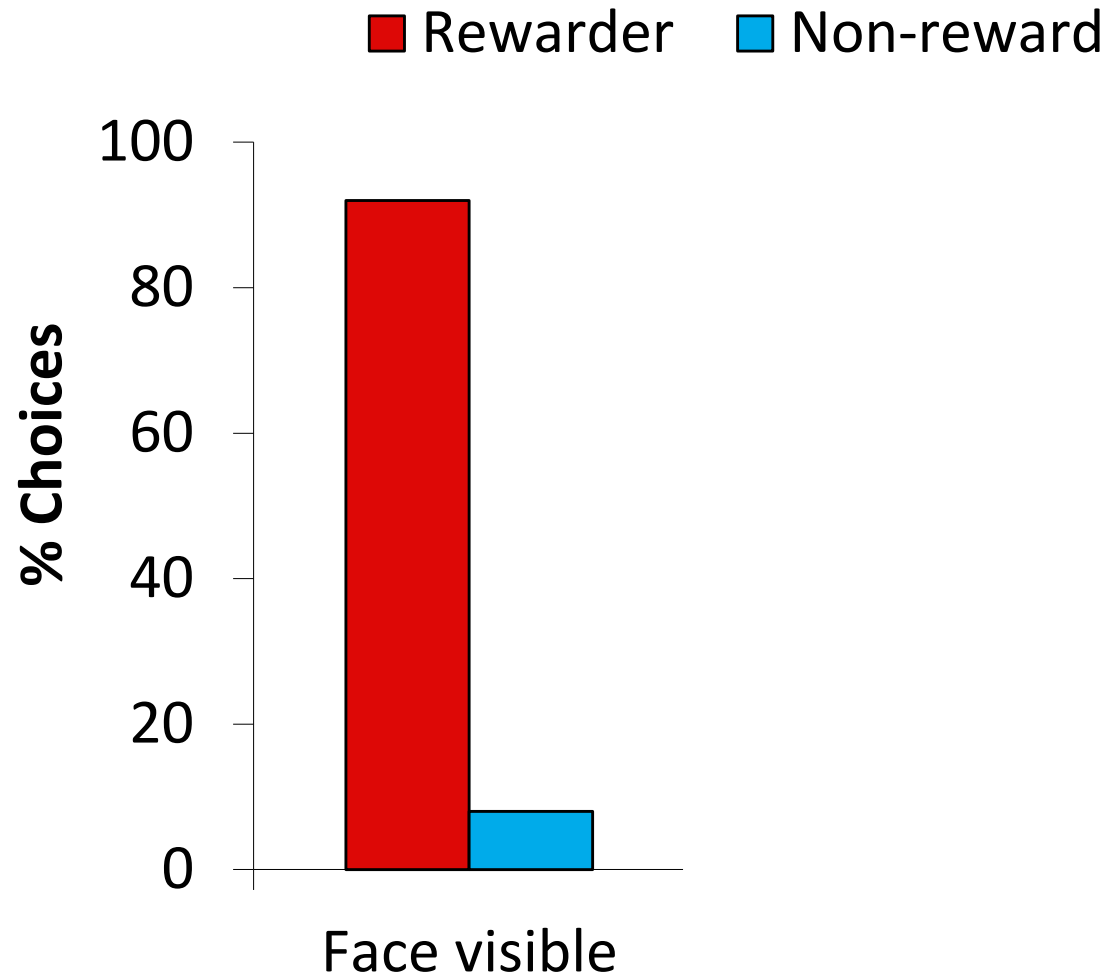
Cows trained to push a lever and get food from one person ('rewarder')

Tested to see who cows would choose if:

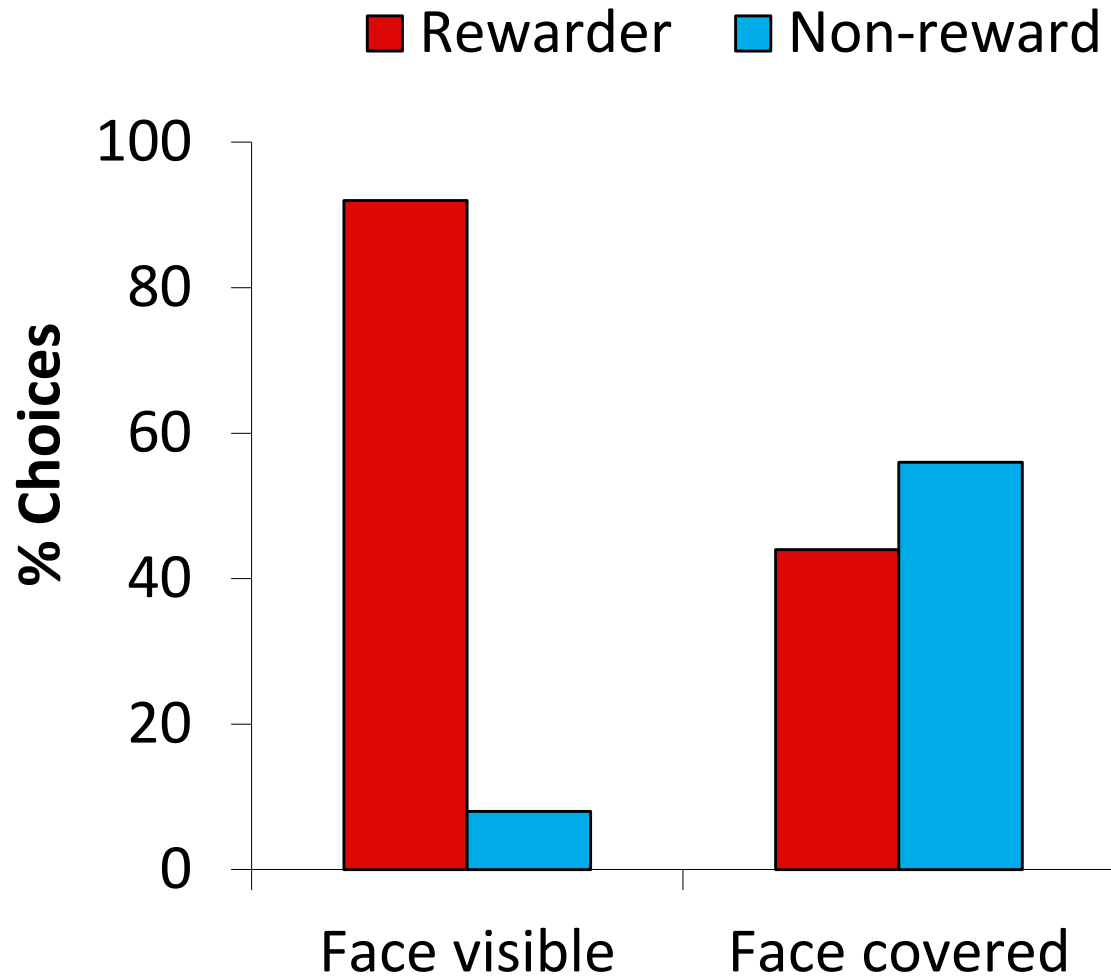
- ✓ Faces were visible
- ✓ Faces were covered



How do cows recognize people?



Cows use **faces** and other features



Negative handler behavior

Australian researchers visited 66 dairy farms and measured the amount of negative handling that cows experienced



Negative handler behavior

Negative handler behavior correlated with:

- ✓ Cow fearfulness (measured by flight zone)
- ✓ Low milk yield
- ✓ Poor conception rates

Benefits of handling training

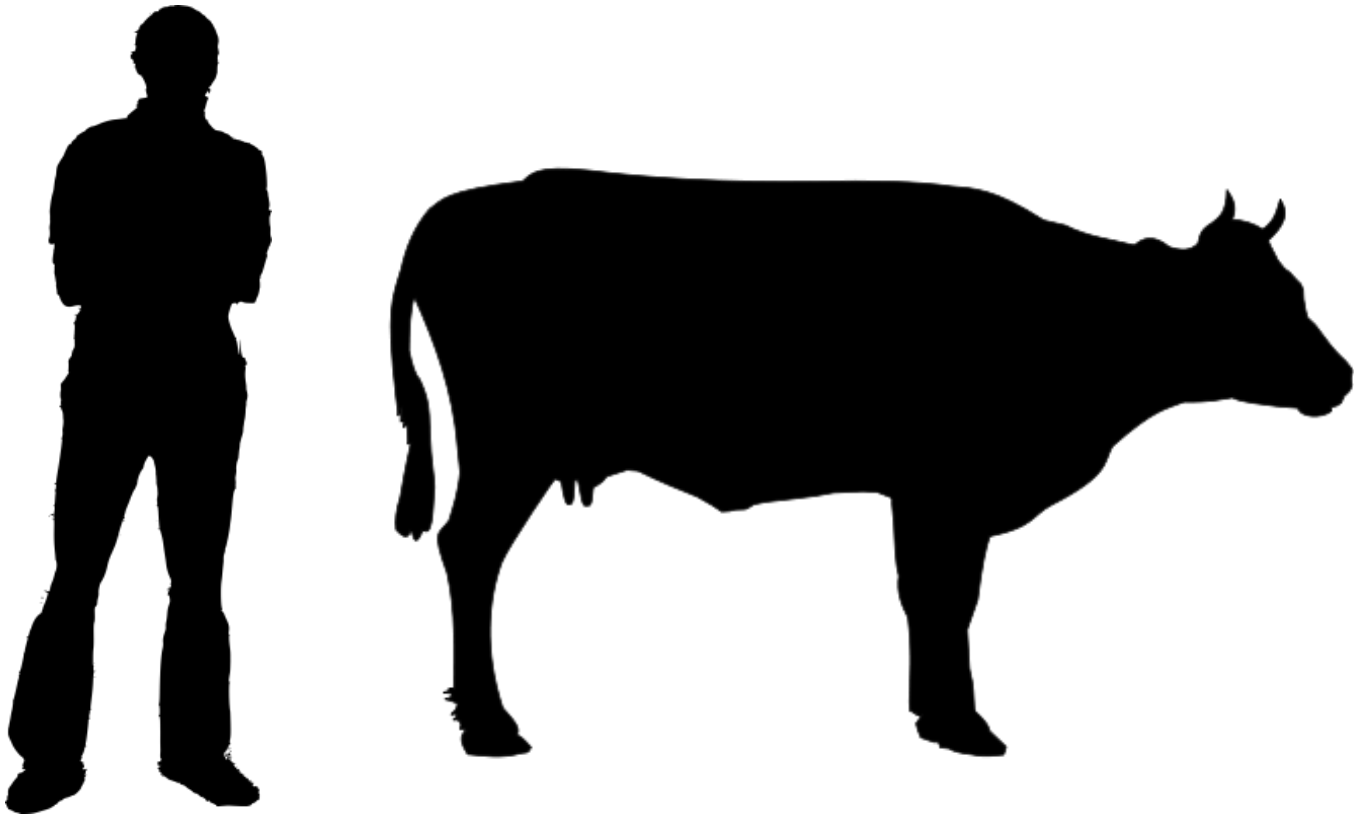
When producers were given a course on animal handling:

- ✓ They were less likely to use negative handling
- ✓ They believed that cows were easier to handle
- ✓ Cows produced more milk and had higher conception rates

Low-stress handling

There are handling techniques that handlers can learn so they **do not** need to shout, hit, kick or prod the cows to get them to move

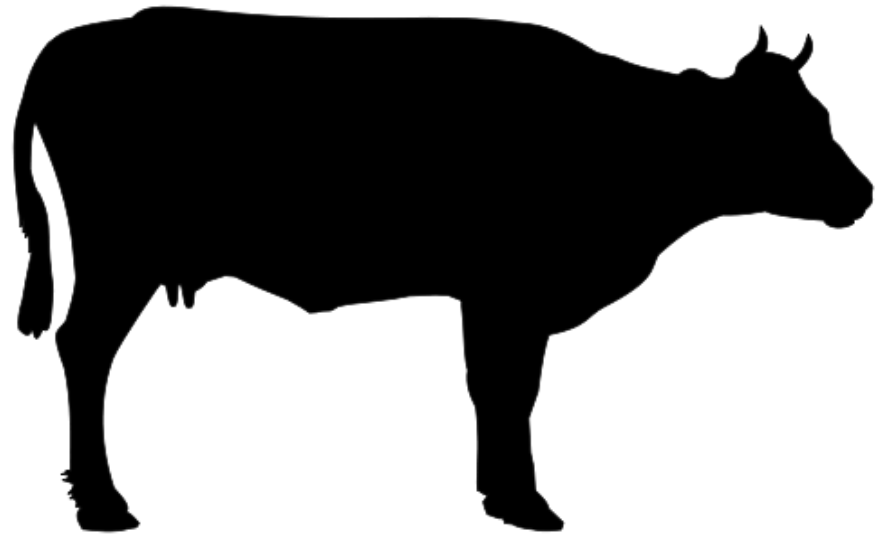
Determining if a farm could benefit from training



LOOK AND LISTEN

Look and listen to the cows

- Do they have large flight zones?
- Do they look 'on-edge' or vigilant?
- Do they quickly move away from you and other people?
- Do they slip/fall?
- Do they 'bunch'?
- Do they vocalize?



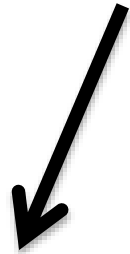
Look and listen to the handlers



- Do they hit/punch the cows?
- Are they using a prod when it is not necessary?
- Are they yelling/cursing?
- Are they banging objects together to make loud noise?
- Do they drag calves?
- Do they seem like they don't care about the animals?

If YES to any of those questions

- Handlers and their cows would benefit from handling training
- Training should teach skills, but should also impact attitude



Why should I care?

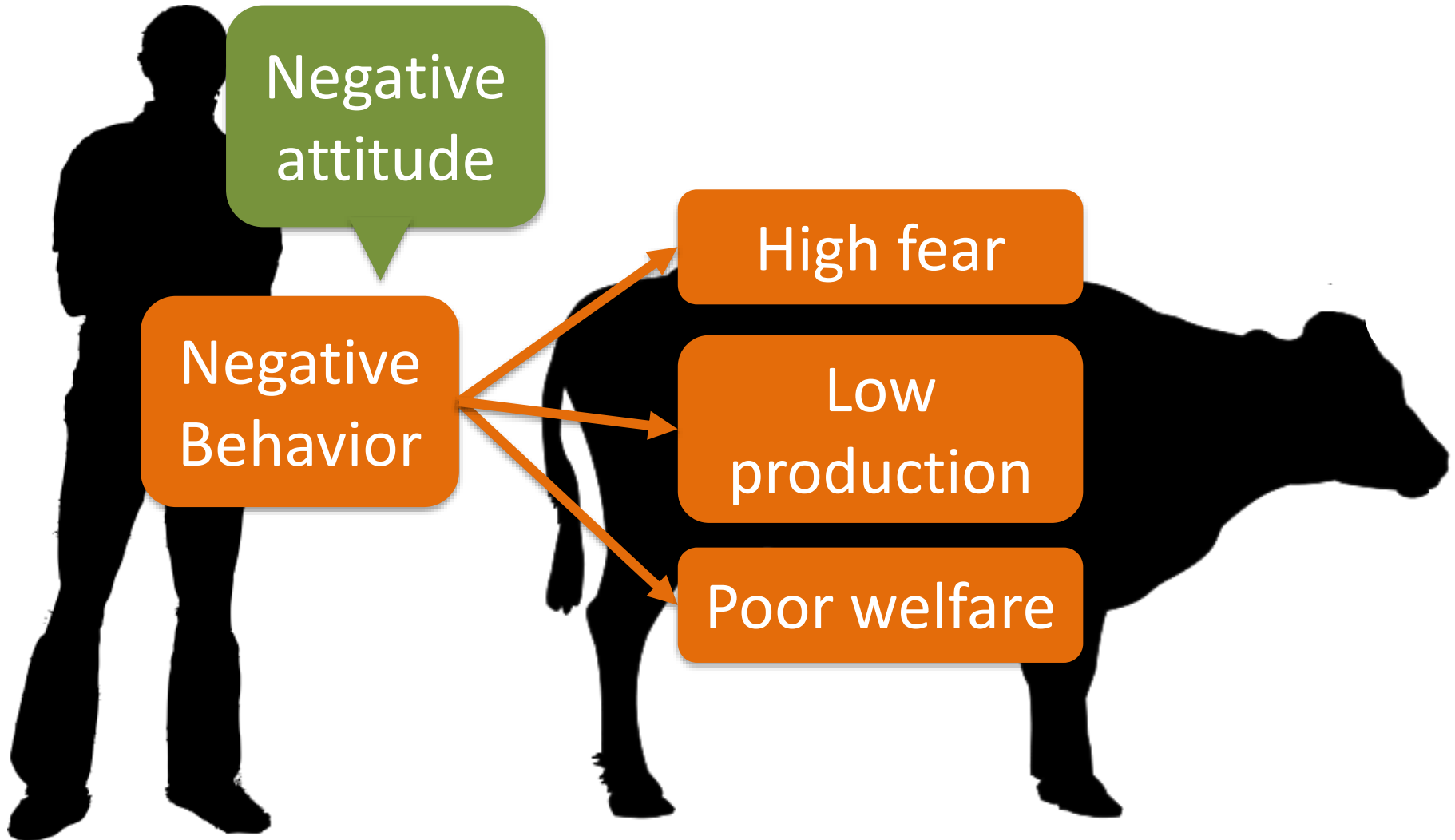


- Moving cows using flight zone and point of balance
- Avoiding negative behavior
- Using herd behavior to move cows
- Using positive reinforcement

Measuring flight zone

- Chose a sample of cows to measure
- Slowly start to walk up to cows at the feedbunk or in the pen (1 step/sec)
- If cows are moving away when you are $> \sim 5$ to 10ft away, they are likely fearful

Handler behavior and animal welfare



Improving attitude

- Improving skills can improve attitude and job satisfaction
- Owners should be aware of employees that do not care about the animals, or are not satisfied with their jobs

Action should be taken when...

- The employees could benefit from training
- If you see something that you are not comfortable with
- If employee attitude is a problem

See abuse, stop abuse



Handling training available

- **Merck DairyCare365™**

<https://www.dairycares365.com/solution/dairy-care365-training-series>

- **Validus/Kansas State Animal Care Training**

<https://www.animalcaretraining.org/PackageDetail.aspx?type=DAIRY>

- **ProHand Dairy Cows**

Coming soon...

- **National Dairy FARM Program**

<http://www.nationaldairyfarm.com/resources>

Questions?