

"New Ways to Think About 'Off the Wall!'"



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NO! I'm not talking about your whacky uncle. (This is about cutting horses!!!)

I'm sure you've noticed how uncomfortable it can seem when you move out of the middle third of the arena and travel across the pen toward the outer thirds of the arena.

It's incredible that within the space of five to ten feet, you feel like you go from a sense of having it all "handled" (in the middle of the pen) to being in the North 40 pasture on the ends.

Trying to work the cow and keep it all together with yourself and your horse can be a little tricky on the ends!

The fact is, in most situations, the faster the cow and the longer the distance travelled, the less controlled it can feel.

When you arrive at the wall, there could be even a couple additional aspects that can magnify this situation even more:

- YOU want to get the heck out of Dodge and get back to the middle of the arena where you feel safer, so you may not stay as patient and in time with the cow on the ends. This can translate to fidgeting in the saddle, kicking too soon, and feeling rushed.
- YOUR HORSE might not want to travel all the way to the ends and wait if you are not comfortable, or if you don't ask him to do so.
 - Over time some horses can "get smart" and try to stop short of the wall. This usually translates into turning way too quickly when the cow moves. That usually means you end up coming off the wall way ahead of the cow.

So in the spirit of overcoming the above challenges, when the cow travels all the way to the wall and then comes back off of the wall, it is good to keep these things in mind:

1. Be clear about what affect you want to have on the cow when it leaves the wall.

- You want to ALLOW the cow to travel to the middle of the arena. If you get ahead of the cow enough to cause the cow to stop and or turn before it approaches the middle of the arena, you cannot regain control the cow in the credit earning center third of the arena.
- When you are aware that your goal is to allow the cow to approach mid-arena, then you feel much more aware and purposeful in how you use your feet and seat to slow down or speed up to achieve this. You do not want to get ahead of the cow coming out of an outer third of the arena.

2. With a new clarity of purpose about how you DO want to influence the cow, you can now obtain that special rhythm needed to flow off the wall smoothly.

- Make sure you stay at least even or slightly ahead of the cow as you travel to the wall.
 - Arrive at the wall at a right angle to the wall and even with the cow.
 - Allow the cow to "drag" your horse off the wall, which means you stay low and patient as the cow departs first. This is similar to any time you work a cow, but that sense of waiting is even more dramatic on the wall, and absolutely necessary.
 - Become increasingly aware of allowing the cow to travel to the middle of the arena. Then get in a position to stop the cow.
- With a new sense of a target for the cow, mid-arena, you will be more likely to ride to help your horse rate the cow appropriately.

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