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Suggestions For Videotaping Cattle

- Mini-DV is the format we use for our video. These are broadcast quality formats and make the cattle look as good as they're going to.
- 'Blacking' or 'striping' each tape before you use it helps us by putting time code on the tape, so we know where each lot can be found. If the tape is not 'blacked', the time code will go back to 0:00 every time you turn the camera back on. You do this by covering the lens and recording through the whole 60-minute tape and then re-winding it so you can start at the beginning. The best time to do this is probably the night before you head out to video cattle.
- Prepare a slate on a piece of paper or marker board for each consignment. Make sure it states the name under which the cattle are consigned, number of head, sex, weight, the sale date and rep's name. Video this slate for 5-10 seconds before starting on the cattle.
- If starting at the beginning of a tape, record at least 15-30 seconds before you start on the slate of the cattle you're filming. Tapes have a tendency to stretch at the beginning and lose quality.
- Try to make sure the sun is always at your back when videoing the cattle. If you have to shoot into the sun, shoot as little of the sky as possible.
- If possible, make sure the consignor has the cattle gathered and cowboys handy to drive them (at a walk) cross ways in front of the camera. Moving them along a fence line is a good way.
- Take some time. Let the cattle move in front of the camera while you keep the camera focused on one spot. Try to minimize the amount of "panning" (moving camera side-to-side), although sometimes it's necessary if the cattle are scattered and not moving. If you have to move the camera around, give at least 5 full seconds to each animal (count to 10 slowly) before moving on to the next one. Give us 4-5 minutes of film for each lot. This allows us to pick the best of what you've done and best serves the consignor and buyer. You cannot have too much video, but you can damned sure have too little! Also...let us know where the best video you've shot is located on the tape...or we will just start at the beginning of each lot.
- When filming calves w/cows, make sure you get mostly calves, since that's what we're selling.
- Don't get too close or too far away while filming. Between one and two head fitting comfortably in the frame at a time (as you watch through the view finder) is just about right.
- Keep the cattle in the middle of the frame (vertically, as seen through the view finder). There needs to be room for graphics above and below the cattle when they're on the screen.
- If the cattle are out of focus in the viewfinder, they will be out of focus on the tape. Also, if the date and time are showing in the viewfinder, get rid of them. They will show up on your tape.
- Try not to "skyline" the cattle, especially the blacks. They will end up as poorly defined silhouettes. Film them against a solid, dark background such as a hill, barn or trees, especially if there is snow on the ground. In case of snow, zoom in to fill frame with cattle, not snow.
- Label the tape box with each consignment in the order it appears on the tape. Same info as on the slate. Be sure and keep the tape in the box! It protects it from dust and other damage.
- If you have any special editing instructions, e.g.-"take out the Corriente", put it on the slate and also include it with the info on the tape box.
- Send tapes by FedEx, UPS, or Postal Overnight. Do not send them by regular mail or UPS Ground. With FedEx and UPS, you must use the physical address, not a PO Box. Be sure and pad around the tape when you send it. Nothing is more disheartening than finding a tape in pieces when it comes out of the UPS bag. It means you'll have to film them again! It's happened!
- Finally, as you're filming, just keep in mind the way you'd like to see the cattle if you were interested in buying them. If you have any questions, please give me a call any time.

Kevin Devine: (530) 347-3793 / e-mail: wvm@wvmcattle.com Good Luck!