



How to Photograph Your Cattle

Take Your Time

TAKE IT SERIOUSLY • PREPARE • BE PATIENT

Photographing your cattle's portrait should be taken as seriously as taking a portrait of a person. You want them to look good and capture who they are. What you are not doing is just taking a few snaps thinking that will do.

Be prepared to spend some time to get your shot ready and work with your talent to capture the best photo. It may take time to find the right location and set it up. Likewise, rarely is your talent ready in the first instance. Also walking the animal around and starting again with a different stance can give you several options to select from when you're done.

Set Up and Location

BACKGROUND • SURROUNDS • EVEN GROUND

Look for the right location. Keep the background as simple as possible away from junk, scrub and rocks that will be distracting and unsightly in the background and, please, be sure there isn't going to be a tree or fence post coming out of the animals back...

If in a paddock make sure the pasture isn't too long, we want to see those toes.

Look at the scene through your device to see what it will look like before you get your animal there to make sure. The camera's eye is not the same as your own and places look very different through the lens.

Avoid uneven ground, you want all legs as even as possible to avoid shoulders or hips bulging.

Apparently, the animal facing 'up-hill' on a slightly rising slope is the best look. The next best is flat ground, but avoid a downwards slopes, it just looks bad.

The Talent

GET CLEAN • CONTEXT • THE POSE

First of all make sure your star isn't caked in mud. Dirty animals aren't likely to attract as many sales enquiries, are they.

Halter led photos are by far the best and cattle photographed unled in paddocks are going to be far harder to place in the right spot and pose properly.

People in the shot can show your animal has a great temperament and offers a sense of scale.

The animals pose should be where you can see all four legs comfortably apart, no scissor legs. Avoid over or under extending the distance between the front and back

legs. They should look comfortable. The gold standard is the near-side legs should be a little behind the off-side, both front and rear. If you can position the animals rear leg facing a little towards the camera the udder or testicles will be in better view.

Your subject should look alert yet calm. Shoot from the side and if you have someone create a noise or call them to encourage your subject to look about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way towards the camera, ears up and looking alert. Straight ahead is not ideal but looking directly at the camera is a no-no. You lose all the shape of the head and neck.

Avoid 'slouching' in posture, where the animal takes its weight off one of its legs.

Before you take your shots wait for the animal to settle. After they have settled pressure them to step forward (or back) to adopt a better posture. Having a mate or friend in an adjacent yard, or nearby in the paddock can help your animal feel relaxed and under pressure.

Your Camera Technique

DEVICES • LIGHT • POSITION • FRAMING

Pictures from smartphones or tablets should be fine. Just clean the lens and set it to take high res if you can.

Make sure you turn your phone or Ipad to take the photo in landscape the animal will fit better in the frame.

Make sure there is lots of light and keep the sun behind you. The nicest light is early in the morning or late in the day about an hour before sunset. The golden hour as they say in the movie business.

Shoot side on, as flat as possible, to avoid the head or rump looking disproportionate.

Take the photograph from the same height as the animal's head. Otherwise they will look smaller than they are.

Have the subject fill the frame with not too much space around them. Just enough for context. We aren't buying the whole property, so we don't need to see it.

Avoid optical distortion that can happen when you stand too close to the animal, and use a wide-angle setting. Often phones have a slightly wide angle as standard so you can fit in all your friends at selfie distance. Stand a little further back and zoom-in to filling frame.

Experiment with "portrait" mode on your device to see if you can pull to background out of focus for a professional look...