

How to take a picture of cows without being stampeded

by Milton Heiberg

1. Get up early in the morning and stop off at McDonald's for a fast-food breakfast. I like a Bacon & Egg Bagel. Also pick up a "Salad Plate" for the cow. (Not a Big Mac—cows are very sensitive about that.)



2. Arrive at the cow pasture before dawn. Cows and many other subjects look their best with a subdued foggy background. The early morning light is always the best—with or without fog.



3. Get at least one cow in the herd to look at you. This is easy—cows always look at the silly person with a box in front of one eye. Put the selected cow into the “rule of thirds” (or not) looking *into* the frame (or at you). Remember the first rule of composition—“There are no rules.” Photography is an art. But know the rules anyway, and when to break them.



4. Be at the same eye level with your subject (animal or person, child or adult, standing or sitting). However, when cows are being herded, it is best to have some elevation to get a sense of the size of the herd, and crowding that takes place. In the example below I opted for the bed of a small truck. It also prevented being stampeded.



5. When photographing cows, or any subjects in a group, focus on the closest one (assuming that it is one facing you) and stop down to a small aperture for good depth of field— $f/11$ or smaller. You will most likely need to increase your ISO setting to at least 400 depending on the light and motion of the moving herd.
6. Spend time to get to know the cows. Follow the first rule of photography from [Milton's Top Ten List](#)—“Love your subject more than your camera.”
7. By now it's lunch time. Eat the salad plate if a cow hasn't stolen it.

Legal notice: The author cannot be held responsible for any unfortunate hoof prints on body parts, camera damage, resulting divorces, broken bones, paternal lawsuits, flea infestations, milk stains, or other cow-camera injuries while in Mexico City, Barcelona, New York City, or any other rodeo arenas, or wherever there are cows present.