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Association of New Zealand

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Cow Games Introduction



Introduction and Philosophy:

Cow Games are not just games for games sake. They are activities with the specific intention of building team work. Cow Games are extremely great ideas when your church budget is low and your time allotments are limited. Cow Games are essentially team building activities that can be done with materials that just happen to be laying around your church or home...

Cow Games help youth and adults focus on some key issues in leadership:

- Who should lead? Should just one person lead? How does team work happen with multiple leaders?
- How do women and men lead differently? There are many voices in our world that teach women to be passive and men to be dominant! We need another model.

A Few helpful hints: A Cow Game is most productive when followed with a debriefing time: (See below for details). Critical to the process is allowing the youth to develop and struggle as a team. Jumping in to correct a team problem too early will

inhibit the team from developing and the youth from developing good group leadership skills. However, sometimes making adjustments to the rules can encourage the youth to productively struggle with their understanding of team. Example: If the girls are being dominated by the boys say, "For the next 5 minutes boys cannot talk!" Be sure to ask a question about this in the debriefing time.

Alternative Options:

1. Play Cow Games in a series.

In this option, all injuries last through out the whole series. The team has to carry any and all "Cows" and adjust their strategy for accomplishing the activity appropriately. By playing Cow Games in consecutive order the youth have to plan their losses more carefully. NOTE: The leader is free to give grace to some of the injuries if one feels that the activity would be impossible.

2. Play the same Cow Game 2-3 Weeks (days) in a row.

By playing the same Cow Game 2-3 weeks in a row the youth develop a sense of challenge to work better as a team. They will try to do it quicker and with fewer injuries each time. NOTE: A Cow Game changes when the group changes. (i.e. If a key leader is missing the next week(day) the group dynamics change and so does the group building). Even when youth know the answer it is still about working together with those who make up the team that particular day.

Pillow Crossing

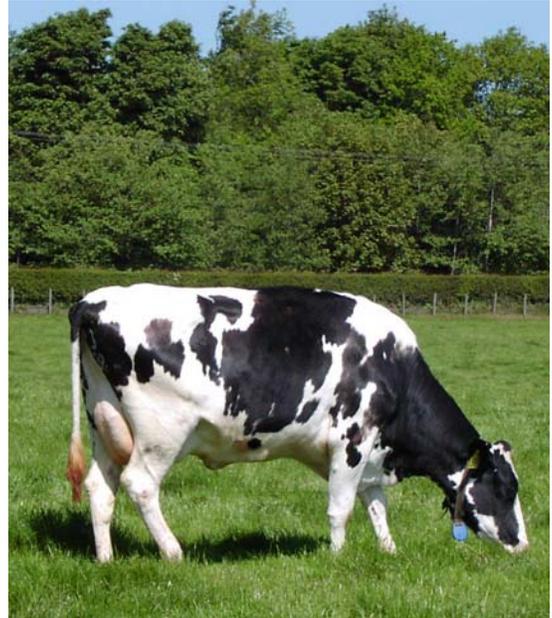
Materials: Two large pillows or similar objects, a roll of masking tape, a Broom and a surface in which pillows can slide, (i.e. gym, fellowship hall, or a non-carpeted long hallway). If the hallway is used you must make the walls untouchable!

Set Up: Place two pieces of tape approximately 25 feet apart (a little more for some and a little less for others). These will be the beginning and ending of said activity. Place the two pillows and broom at one end of course. (The pillows should be just big enough to allow the whole group to crowd on to them).

Instructions: Have the youth gather at the end of the course with the pillows and broom. Tell them, "Your herd of cows has made it to a great river and need to get across to the other side before the farmer catches up with you. The farmer is 15 minutes behind you. The whole team must travel together with all the given equipment and the river is a fast-moving river and if anyone touches the floor (in between the tape marks) during the crossing one cow will be lost. (If three cows are lost they have to start over).

Possible Solution: All the youth pile onto one pillow (holding each other tight). They use the broom to push the other pillow in to position then the whole team steps onto that pillow and proceed to walk across the river. (Other solutions are possible, let the youth be creative as long as they follow the game parameters).

Debriefing Time: Have the youth sit down and relax for a moment. Ask the youth to rate themselves as a team: 1 bad - 10 great. Ask them why and encourage them to share their opinions with each other. Ask them what things helped them as a team and what things got in the way of their team work. End by encouraging the youth in their team work and either move on to the next Cow Game or thank them for their efforts.



Cow Pen

Materials: A rope or similar item. Objects that can act as fence posts (i.e., trees, a stack of four chairs, a volleyball pole...).

Set Up: Place or locate your "fence posts" in a triangle. Tie your rope at about 4 feet on the post and run it around to the other "posts" creating a Pen. (a little higher for some and a little less for others: about chest high for your average participant).

Instructions: Have the youth gather inside the pen. Begin by telling them that they are a herd of cows and the farmer is coming to take them to McDonald's to become dinner in 15 minutes. They are inside an electric Cow Pen and the fence posts are also electric. If any one touches these electric places they will lose a limb (arm or leg) for the rest of the activity. Their task is to get the whole herd (team) up and over the fence (no going under) without losing any (or as few as possible) limbs before the farmer comes in 15 minutes. **WARNING: YOUTH WILL ATTEMPT TO THROW YOUTH OUT ON THEIR HEADS. DO NOT ALLOW THE THROWING OF YOUTH. PREPARE TO PROVIDE SAFETY CHECKS AND IF YOU HAVE A MATTRESS OR TWO PLACE THEM ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE FENCE.**

Possible Solution: One youth gets on all fours, making a step. Two others lean over and place their hands on first youth's lower back or shoulders, making two second steps. All others help the steps balance and help one youth step up onto the steps and over the fence. Then that person becomes a step on the others side. × Key to the solution is choosing the last person to get out; Best if this person can jump out on his/her own or the person is the lightest person in the group so that the team can just slowly lift him/her out over the line. Someone always ask if they can just sacrifice their life for the herd or most often some members ask to sacrifice another member of the team without their consent. If this occurs just deal with this in the Debriefing time. Ask: How the youth felt about it; from the perspective of the sacrifice to the sacrificer?

Debriefing Time: Have the youth sit down and relax for a moment. Ask the youth to rate themselves as a team: 1 bad - 10 great. Ask them why and encourage them to share their opinions with each other. Ask them what things helped them as a team and what things got in the way of their team work. End by encouraging the youth in their team work and either move on to the next Cow Game or thank them for their efforts.

Stairs

Materials: You need a set of stairs! 5-7 steps with a platform works best but others can be adjusted.

Set Up: Ask the youth to stand at the bottom of the stairs! Difficult set up I know!

Instructions: As the youth stand at the bottom of the stairs and you stand on step you want them to get to (5th -7th, depending on their height and all) tell the youth exactly this: "Your task is to get your whole herd (team) from where you are now to this step without touching the walls, the banisters or the steps in between. You have 15 minutes to accomplish this task." Any touch results in a loss of limb like in the Cow Pen activity.

Possible Solution: There are two possible solutions for this activity, one mental and one physical. 1) If they decide as a whole team to go around (assuming that there is a second entrance or stair case) 2) Building a step like the Cow Pen will enable most of the team

to step across to the step with minimal effort. See diagram:
The last person either jumps or is pulled up by the rest of the group. Note this is either a very easy Cow Game or a very difficult one.

Debriefing Time: Have the youth sit down and relax for a moment. Ask the youth to rate themselves as a team: 1 bad - 10 great. Ask them why and encourage them to share their opinions with each other. Ask them what things helped them as a team and what things got in the way of their team work. End by encouraging the youth in their team work and either move on to the next Cow Game or thank them for their efforts.

Through the Hoops

Materials: Two hoops (hula Hoops work but something similar would work too), a role of masking tape and some yarn or string.

Set Up: Using the two pieces of string per hoop hang from the ceiling or tree. Place the hoops about 2 feet apart and at varied heights between 3 feet to 5 feet off the ground. (vary this based on the average height of your participants). Place the tape on the ground forming a 3 ft by 4 ft box on the ground directly underneath the hoops.



Instructions: Have the youth gather around the hoops. Inform them that they are not allowed to step inside the box, or touch the hoops. The hoops are electric and the box represents quicksand in which any cow would surely die. They need to get the whole herd "team" through these two hoops and over the quicksand. There are no rules as to where they must stand as long as they don't touch the hoops or step into the box. A touch of the hoops means the loss of a limb and stepping into the box means a lost cow and that member has to sit down. (Adjust this activity as needed--make it possible but challenging).

Possible Solution: The youth gather around all sides of the hoops and lift person up on one side and slowly pass them through the hoops and safely let them down on the other side. The solution is fairly simple but the team work is somewhat difficult.

Debriefing Time: Have the youth sit down and relax for a moment. Ask the youth to rate themselves as a team: 1 bad - 10 great. Ask them why and encourage them to share their opinions with each other. Ask them what things helped them as a team and what things got in the way of their team work. End by encouraging the youth in their team work and either move on to the next Cow Game or thank them for their efforts.

Mouse Hole

Materials: Two chairs and yarn or rope.

Set Up: Similar to the hoops though somewhat easier... Place chairs about 2-3 feet apart (vary depending upon the participants). Tie the rope on one of the legs of the chair and then run rope to the other chair, up to the top and then back over to the other chair creating a 3*3ft square or "mouse hole."

Instructions: Choose one side of the "hole" to be the beginning and have the youth gather on that side. Tell them that they can only get to the other side by going through the "hole". Inform them that the chairs are electric and so is the rope and therefore, if they touch them they will lose a limb. Their task again is to try to get the whole "herd" team through in 15 minutes before, "yes you guessed it" the farmer comes to take them out to be dinner.

Possible Solution: The famous human wheel barrel works great for this exercise. However, it takes the whole team giving a hand to make sure no one touches the chairs or the rope. If people can just squeeze through make the hole smaller.

Debriefing Time: Have the youth sit down and relax for a moment. Ask the youth to rate themselves as a team: 1 bad - 10 great. Ask them why and encourage them to share their opinions with each other. Ask them what things helped them as a team and what things got in the way of their team work. End by encouraging the youth in their team work and either move on to the next Cow Game or thank them for their efforts.

Beam me Up...Moo

Materials: A piece of foam or wood or construction paper. Generally it should be about 2ft by 2ft for every 8 to 10 people. However, again adjust depending on the size of the youth.

Set Up: Place the piece of wood or similar object on the floor at least 5 feet from any wall or other object.

Instructions: Have the youth gather around the square and say, "Your herd has found itself stranded on another planet and the sun will be going down in 15 minutes. If the herd is still on the planet at that time they will surely freeze to death." By chance a passing starship radios and says that it has enough power to operate its transporter one time. The good news is that if the whole team can get onto the beam out spot - "the



square" have no legs touching the floor then the whole team can be saved. Just so the ship knows when to activate the transporter they should say "mooo" all together. If they keep their whole team off the ground and on the beam out pad for 3 seconds the transport is successful. (give them several chances)

Possible Solution: The youth need to place one foot on the pad, while reaching across the pad to grab a hand of someone of the approximate same size. Leaning back and balancing they should be able to hold their other foot up for the 3 seconds. For larger groups sometimes putting people on shoulders and using the same technique is successful too. Other solutions may be possible... Let them be creative.

Debriefing Time: Have the youth sit down and relax for a moment. Ask the youth to rate themselves as a team: 1 bad - 10 great. Ask them why and encourage them to share their opinions with each other. Ask them what things helped them as a team and what things got in the way of their team work. End by encouraging the youth in their team work and either move on to the next Cow Game or thank them for their effort.

Creek Crossing

Materials: Two pieces of wood (2*4 or similar) long enough that all but 2 or 3 members of the team can fit. Three tires or similar item. One 20 ft rope. Tape and a room or outdoor flat area at least 25 feet long.

Set Up: Place two 8 ft pieces of tape 25 ft apart to mark either side of the Creak. Place the two pieces of wood, the rope and the three tires together one side of the creak.

Instructions: Have the youth gather on one side of the "creak" with the material. Inform them that the herd has come to a major river and needs get across. They have to travel together and carry all of their given supplies with them. Tell them that they have been given two boards that do not float, three tires that do float and can support the people or boards and they are given a section of rope. They have 20 minutes for this activity.

Three steps off and they have to begin again or you can play for limbs like in the Cow Pen a Activity although this is the harder version.

Possible Solution: They begin by connecting the rope to one of the tires and throw it out into the "Creak." They use the rope to pull the tire back into position such that one edge of the first board can rest on the shore and the other on the tire. Then they tie the other end of the rope to a second tire and one person carries it to the end of the first tire and puts it into place. The second board is then passed up by the team and place on the second tire completing the first section of bridge. They all file onto the bridge bringing the third tire along. Everyone crowds onto the farthest tire and board freeing up the back tire and board to be passed up front to make another section of bridge. They continue this movement until they reach the other side. See Diagram:

Debriefing Time: Have the youth sit down and relax for a moment. Ask the youth to rate

themselves as a team: 1 bad - 10 great. Ask them why and encourage them to share their opinions with each other. Ask them what things helped them as a team and what things got in the way of their team work. End by encouraging the youth in their team work and either move on to the next Cow Game or thank them for their efforts.

Horse (cow) shoe

Materials: Three (2*4 or 2*6) pieces of wood or similar object approximately 8 feet long each. A rope for the more difficult version.

Set Up: Place the a three boards in such a way to form a horse shoe like object.

Instructions: Have the youth find a spot on the boards. Let them determine their own order. Then tell the team that they simply need to line up according to height, or age or alphabetical order: your call. They are not allowed to step off the boards. You can play "three steps off" or play for limbs again. If you want to make this game a little more difficult take the rope and have the youth thread it through their belt loops or another similar way.

Possible Solution: With out the rope the youth simply use the corners to step across. It takes some adjusting and mental calculations but the solution is fairly basic. With the rope they have to take into account the threading of the rope back and forth but still it is fairly basic.

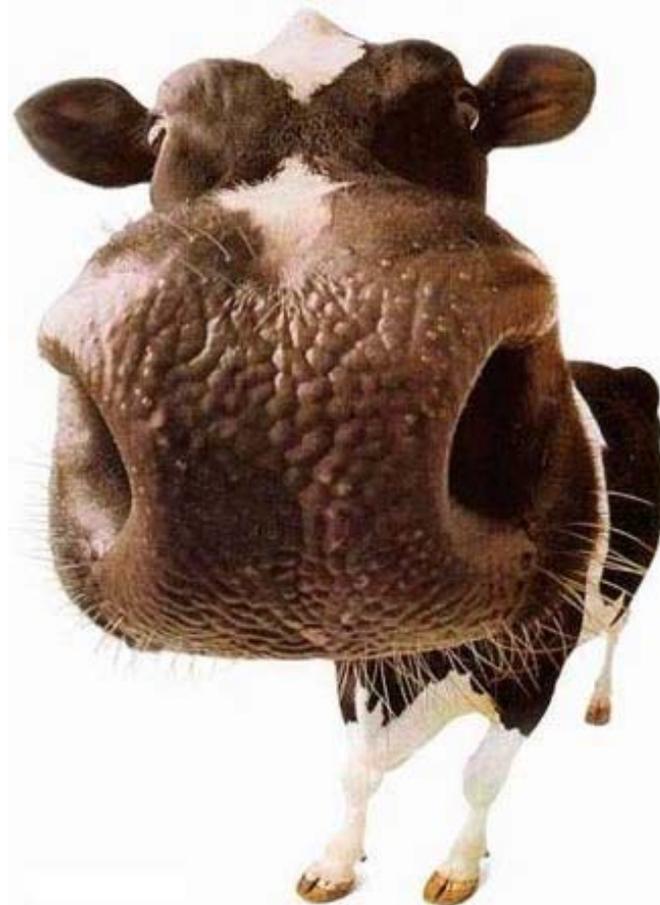
Debriefing Time: Have the youth sit down and relax for a moment. Ask the youth to rate themselves as a team: 1 bad - 10 great. Ask them why and encourage them to share their opinions with each other. Ask them what things helped them as a team and what things got in the way of their team work. End by encouraging the youth in their team work and either move on to the next Cow Game or thank them for their efforts.

2x4 exchange line up

Materials: One (2*4 or 2*6) piece of wood or similar object approximately 8 feet long or as long as needed for the amount of people.

Set Up: Place the board on the ground...Major set up, I know!

Instructions: Have the youth find a spot on the board. Let them determine their own order. Then tell the team that they simply need to line up according to height, or age or



alphabetical order: your call. They are not allowed to step off the board. You can play "three steps off" or play for limbs again.

Possible Solution: There are no corners in this Cow Game, like in the Cow Shoe version but the team work principle is the same. There are several solutions to this one but here is one: In order to exchange positions one member squats down in a frog like position and then another person steps over the back of the frog person with another member of the team helping with balance.

Debriefing Time: Have the youth sit down and relax for a moment. Ask the youth to rate themselves as a team: 1 bad - 10 great. Ask them why and encourage them to share their opinions with each other. Ask them what things helped them as a team and what things got in the way of their team work. End by encouraging the youth in their team work and either move on to the next Cow Game or thank them for their efforts.

Balancing beam

Materials: Two (2*4 or 2*6) pieces of wood or similar object with one being approximately 8 feet long or as long as needed for the amount of people and the other being 4 ft or so.

Set Up: Place the 4ft board on the ground and then place the 8ft board cross ways on top of the 4ft board. You are creating a cross-looking teeter totter shaped object.

Instructions: The youth must arrange themselves on the board so that it balances for 3 seconds. BE AWARE that the board does tend to move left and right as well. If this is too dangerous or you would like to simplify the game place a nail on either side of the 8ft board.



Possible Solution: The solution is fairly basic; they simply line up in an order that will balance. However, this is often more difficult than it first appears. They were learn that moving slow and holding onto each other will greatly increase their chances for success.

Debriefing Time: Have the youth sit down and relax for a moment. Ask the youth to rate themselves as a team: 1 bad - 10 great. Ask them why and encourage them to share their opinions with each other. Ask them what things helped them

as a team and what things got in the way of their team work. End by encouraging the youth in their team work and either move on to the next Cow Game or thank them for their efforts.

Ball Move

Materials: One or more large balls (3 feet wide) or similar objects like a garbage bags full of balloons or heavier material, depending on how difficult you want to make the game.

Set Up: Using the masking tape make a square on the floor that will be 1ft wider on each side of the ball. Have the ball like object sitting on the floor in the middle of the masking tape square. Add one ball for every 5 or 6 people. Another difficult set up...

Instructions: Inform the youth that ball represents an injured calf and their task is to carry the "calf" to a safe location. (If more than one, add: These "calves" are twins/triplets and must stay in close proximity of each other.) Simple enough, except that cows can't use their hands and arms like humans so they will not be allowed to use their hand or arms in this game. Designate a location that they must take the "calf" to; make it up a stair case or two through a door way and down a small hallway (be creative). Tell them that the "calf" cannot touch the ground outside the square and if it does at any time during the journey they will have to start over.

Possible Solution: Again the creativity of the group can usually come up with any number of solutions for this exercise but here is one idea: Four people sit down with their backs firmly against the "calf". They slowly stand up while pressing firmly on the "Calf." Getting through doors and up stairs is just a matter of good communication.

Debriefing Time: Have the youth sit down and relax for a moment. Ask the youth to rate themselves as a team: 1 bad - 10 great. Ask them why and encourage them to share their opinions with each other. Ask them what things helped them as a team and what things got in the way of their team work. End by encouraging the youth in their team work and either move on to the next Cow Game or thank them for their efforts.



The Web

Materials: Two tree like objects approximately 8 ft apart and 50ft piece of rope or yarn.

Set Up: Find or set up two tree like objects 8 ft apart: movable volley ball poles work

or pillars on a shelter house. Then take the rope and begin making a web back and forth between the trees. You want to make the web so that the holes created are both small and large--high and low. Make it so that there are 2 or three more holes than people in the herd. Caution: This activity will need the same kind of safety checks as the Cow Pen Game.

Instructions: Inform the youth that the farmer has found them again and is just over the next hill and be here in 15 minutes. The farmer, with the help of the local spiders, set up this new kind of electric fence as a last defense. Their task is to get the whole team through the web but the farmer designed the web so that each time a cow goes through the hole closes. So each hole can only be used once. The poles are also electrified. This game can be played for limbs or three chances.

Possible Solution: The solution is a matter of planning. The team needs to determine who they can and cannot get through certain holes. It will take the whole team to accomplish this activity. They have to literally watch each other's back so that it does not touch the web. Once they have a few people through the lower bigger holes (note: save one for the last person) they can begin passing each other like crowd surfing.

Debriefing Time: Have the youth sit down and relax for a moment. Ask the youth to rate themselves as a team: 1 bad - 10 great. Ask them why and encourage them to share their opinions with each other. Ask them what things helped them as a team and what things got in the way of their team work. End by encouraging the youth in their team work and either move on to the next Cow Game or thank them for their efforts.

Herd on a Blanket

Materials: A piece of material (A bed sheet or other material works fine). A fellowship hall or gym or smooth concrete of a shelter house.

Set Up: Fold the sheet in such a way that it provides enough room for the whole herd to get on but not too much extra to move around. Place the sheet on the ground.

Instructions: A herd of cows will move together for two primary reasons; protection and food. This is great game to play while waiting for pizza or just put out some cookies or other similar object. Have the youth all stand on the blanket. Their task is to move together on a path determined by you. They are not allowed to step off. (Play for limbs or three misses; each has its own dynamic). At first a reasonable goal of moving together 15 or 20 feet on a slick surface will be sufficient. However, as the team grows you might want to add going up a few stairs and over carpet. Be creative in your path!

Possible Solution: The key to this game is communication, as it is with most. However, moving as a team requires a uniform movement. Sometimes one person volunteers to shout, "Moo . . .ve" every 5 seconds. The team bunny hops forward on command. When you add stairs and carpet it becomes more difficult but still involves the basic

communication. This Cow Game in particular is one in which boys tend to try to dominate and girls are a little passive (This is a general reference, not to suggest that boys or girls have to or will act like this). If this does happen, this is a perfect time to make the rule adjustments

Debriefing Time: Have the youth sit down and relax for a moment. Ask the youth to rate themselves as a team: 1 bad - 10 great. Ask them why and encourage them to share their opinions with each other. Ask them what things helped them as a team and what things got in the way of their team work. End by encouraging the youth in their team work and either move on to the next Cow Game or thank them for their efforts.

Collar me a Cow

Materials: A pole like object (Approximately 2 feet higher than the average height of the participants) and a tire like object (object should weigh at least 3-5 pounds). A rope approximately 5 ft in length. Note: The rope should be shorter than half the length of the pole.

Set Up: Either stick the pole in the ground or use another object that has its own stand (i.e., an indoor flag pole without the flag or a volley ball pole with stand) Then put the tire over the pole. Tie rope onto tire and just before game starts tie around the waist of one of the team members.



Instructions: Inform the youth that the farmer has captured one of their herd and placed this cow in very sensitive electrified alarm device. The good news is that the team is here to save the day. The farmer will return in 15 minutes so the escape must be made quickly. The alarm will be set off if the tire or any other object touches the pole or the rope is untied from the tire or the captured cow. If they set off the alarm they either must start over or sacrifice a cow. (Talk about this element in the debriefing time) The rope is heavily electrified and will destroy any arms or legs that come in contact with it. The captured cow's waist is protected but not his/her arms and legs. Good luck!

Possible Solution: The solution to the escape is to lift both tire and captured cow high enough in order to slide the tire over the pole. It may help to have some of the youth on the shoulders of the others. This maneuver will take the whole team working together. Debriefing Time: Have the youth sit down and relax for a moment. Ask the youth to rate themselves as a team: 1 bad - 10 great. Ask them why and encourage them to share their

opinions with each other. Ask them what things helped them as a team and what things got in the way of their team work. End by encouraging the youth in their team work and either move on to the next Cow Game or thank them for their effort.



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Good for the Church