

Clean Up Ride 2010

MONDAY SEPT 27TH. Trent hauled 3 guests up the mountain to start the circles for the week. In all the years of doing the Clean Up Ride we are yet to get all the cattle even though that is the goal. Unless you have been on one of the trips you can't understand the difficulty in finding all the cattle. Trent took his 3 amigos and headed to Bear Trap to make a ride of that drainage. We had ridden it twice on the Sept Cattle Drive and felt pretty good that we had found all the cattle that were in that pasture. It is hard country to ride with lots of little parks and small timbered drainages that make it very easy to ride by cattle and not even see them. Well, sure enough they found more cattle! They kicked them into Lick Creek which was sort of the central pasture to throw cattle into while we rode the outside circles.

Craig Mead and Dana picked up the rest of the group in Sheridan and headed to cowcamp right after lunch. Since I am also the head cook on the Clean Up Ride, I stayed in camp once we arrived and sent Craig Mead and his wild bunch to Little Switzerland to gather any cattle they might find and kick them down country into Dayton Gulch. Turns out they had a delightful ride as they didn't find any cattle, but did ride into a group of about 60 head of Elk.

TUESDAY SEPT 28TH.

Since this is reality and we have over 100,000 acres inside our boundary, Trent took everyone with him today except Canadian Mark Laberge, who elected to go with the cook. Now cooks have a reputation as being growly, grumpy, mad at the world, but Mark went anyway. Trent was headed to the new allotment, north of the Lake Creek allotment to kick any cattle they found, up over the top of the Dry Fork Ridge, where we hoped that they would then come home on their own and be waiting for us at the bottom, when we got to the bottom with the rest of the herd.

Mark and I headed north to Little Park. It was about a 4 hour ride to get there with lots of timber to ride through and lots of deadfalls to ride around. You always cringe in that type of country because if you find cattle down there and they don't want to come out, you are in for one hell of a long day. I had made this circle a year earlier when the snow was knee deep on a horse and it wasn't a fun ride by any shape of the imagination. (read Ruminant Digest #16). Since it was dry and warm, I wanted to ride it now rather than later. Mark and I were about 2 miles from camp on the way back when I noticed cow tracks on the little used trail we were following. There was a chance that the tracks were moose, but they looked like fresh cow tracks. We had ridden this particular area about 3 times during the Sept Cattle Drive. Since we hadn't had any moisture, the tracks in the dust looked very fresh, but might actually be older than they appeared. We topped out around Anvil Rock and sure enough, right below us (1/2 mile) in the bottom of Lake Creek were a couple head. Now the trick to gathering these cattle that have been missing, is to make sure when they see you, they are headed in the direction you want them to go. Sometimes being by themselves, with all the bow hunters walking through the country at all odd hours of the day, they are a little flighty. We had these headed to the camp, doing just fine and were just about to the horse pasture fence, when I looked over to our left, or east of us and about 2 miles away, as the crow flies I see cattle strung

out headed exactly the wrong direction we need them to go if we are going to get them home. We need them to go West, not East. The shocking thing about gathering cattle on the mountain was that we had trailed the 5 we found in the bottom of Lake Creek, within 1/4 of a mile of the cattle that were now 2 miles away from us. We were within 15 minutes of being done with our 5 head, when I spied the group headed East up Kane Creek. I knew that if the cattle got up over the top of Kane Creek they were going to be real tough to find and get back. I hollered at Mark that I was headed after some more cattle and to kick our group into the horse pasture and off the head cook rode at a high lope back into the bottom of Lake Creek. My poor horse was one that I had just purchased the week before and this was really his first genuine ride in his whole life. He had spent his life in a lot so his world was rather narrow. He couldn't figure out why we were in such a hurry. Since we already had 8 hours in the saddle, he figured he was entitled to at least a month off! He felt as if his world was coming to a crashing halt. Welcome to the Double Rafter Big Jake! Of course, once we got to the bottom of Lake Creek it was then all uphill to the top of Kane Creek. Again, he figured he was entitled to a break. I assured him he would get a break in about 30 days and urged him on. It is very steep up towards the top of Kane Creek and here I finally slowed him to a walk. As we broke out of the trees I could see 4 head up the hill, just about to the top. I knew if they topped out and saw me, they would run downhill probably for at least a mile. I also knew I didn't have enough horse left to out run them, so back into the trees we ducked and we snuck on by them so that when I came out of the trees I was above them. At least now if they wanted to run they would be running downhill but at least headed West!! They threw their heads in the air and gave me that wide eyed stare that cattle do, while they are deciding what to do. They started down through the trees just like everything was fine, even though I didn't feel it was. We went through the first real thick stand of timber and came out in the next little park which is on a real steep hill side. As soon as they came out, they ducked back along the edge of the timber underneath me and then turned and headed East through the belly deep downfall of the forest. The timber was so thick there was no way I could head them off. All I could do was follow. I was out of horse and once we reentered the timber, I got off and lead my horse. He was having to jump downed trees and was completely winded so there was no point in trying to get more out of him. The cattle were completely out of sight by now in the heavy timber, so all I could do was follow their tracks until I could catch sight of them again. Once I came out of the timber, I could see the cattle above me on the hill, nose to tail walking towards the top. They certainly had an idea where they were going, it was just the wrong idea. I stepped back into the saddle and said sorry Big Jake but some time's life gives you horse apples. I took off at a trot around the hill on grade knowing there was no way I could out run them to the top of the hill if they took off. I was going to have to ride all the way around the hill at a slow trot, climbing gradually and hope, I would get to the top before they did. I hoped as long as I was out of sight they wouldn't push it too hard. As I topped out on the skyline from the back side of the ridge, I was feeling much better because I had beaten them to the top and since I was ahead of them, I could give my horse a chance to catch his wind. After several minutes of rest I took down about 10 ft. of nylon rope, knowing that my only chance if the cows started to give me trouble was to convince those cows it was the devil after them. I slowly started to drift the cows towards the logging road because I knew I couldn't get them off the hill we had just

attempted. While it was a mile farther back to camp on the logging road I knew it was my only chance. Just about the time I had the 4 of them on the road it dawned on them they weren't headed to where they wanted to go. That's when the whippings started with the nylon rope. I had to convince those walking hamburgers that it was safer to go down the road than attempt to go the other direction. It was a hell of a bluff because I knew my horse didn't have anything left in his gas tank. But the bluff worked and after the first ¼ mile with beatings coming anytime I could reach them they decided it was better to walk down the road. By the time I got back to camp the Dry Fork Crew was just pulling in. Of course you all know when the cook is the last one into camp it means you better have another cocktail during happy hour because dinner is going to be late.

WEDNESDAY SEPT 29TH:

We had kicked the cattle we had gathered the day before into the horse pasture which had very little to eat, but was at least fenced well on the east side. We hoped it would be enough to bluff them through the night so that we would know immediately in the morning if we had them or not. I have had it happen before where you kick the cattle into the next big pasture and you don't find them for another month. Someone was smiling on us because the next morning all the cattle were still in the horse pasture. We gathered them and headed to Lick Creek to gather that pasture. It turned out to be a hot day, but we had great success and trailed the herd to the Beaver Ponds right below the Green Cabin, to leave them for the night. We had several calves with altitude sickness so each day we dropped in elevation the easier it was for them to breathe. We rode back into camp around 6:30pm. We have never had anyone complain about enough saddle time on one of our trips. But then that's reality for you!

THURSDAY SEPT 30TH:

Today was a reride of Lick Creek and Dayton Gulch plus moving the camp to the next location in the Little Horn. As head cook, I moved the camp to the Little Horn, stuck dinner in the oven, then rode out and helped everyone move the herd on down the canyon. Our goal was to get below the Lower Drift fence in the canyon. We arrived there around 4:pm, doctored 3 or four calves and rode back to camp. The weather was absolutely brilliant. I was completely amazed at how mild and warm it was. We weren't even getting below freezing at night. The Aspen trees were in full color and were absolutely stunning.

FRIDAY OCT 1ST:

Today can be a long day as we have to trail the herd all the way through the Little Horn Canyon. Craig and I packed up camp and headed back to Lake Creek to drive the vehicles off the mountain to the Double Rafter. We had a very late start this morning. Trent went out to gather the Little Horn horse pasture and here is a mare in with our horses and we have no way of knowing where she came from or who she belonged to. Anyway, several of our geldings had fallen in love and were following her wherever she went. You've heard me talk about pretty faces and teenage boys, well that is exactly what was going on. This strange mare had no intention of heading towards the corral. Trent got one bunch of horses in, but couldn't get the 3 or four geldings who had fallen in love to break off from this mare, so we saddled up fresh horses to help him get the rest of ours in. You always feel bad for your horse on days like this because Trent's horse was tired and we hadn't even started the day. Trent ended up having to rope Big Jake to get him away from that mare. Life took a real steep learning curve that week for Big Jake. Ben

Buckles was in camp and he works for Chuck Fuller and none of us had ever seen this strange mare before. We still do not have any idea where she came from or who she belonged to. We left her in the horse pasture and put out the word where she was. We never heard of any one claiming her, but one day she was just gone. She disappeared just as quickly as she had shown up. My guess is that she had belonged to some bowhunter.

Trent and his group had a great day through the canyon though, as it was another beautiful day. The cattle were tired but they made the Rocky Bottom around 3:00pm. You always hope on this day, that since you left the cattle the day before 4 miles from the cabin, that you will ride at least 6 miles before picking up any cattle. Well they found the first cattle right across from the Little Horn cowcamp, only 6 miles sooner than you had hoped.

SATURDAY OCT 2ND:

We had breakfast around 6:30 am as we had 12 miles to go today and they were calling for it to stay hot. The first 4 miles are all uphill so you need to get that accomplished before it gets hot. We had a great trip home however. We stuck all the cows and calves into one pasture and trailed 27 missing yearlings from the Sept Cattle Drive on home. Around 2:00 pm we had to take Tim and Lindy to the airport as they had a flight leaving that day. I was sorry to see them go as I so enjoy them. We were also at a point where I really couldn't stop and say good bye to them. By the time we arrived home, dinner at the Mint sounded like a good idea. The trips so hinge on what Mother Nature gives you for the week. When it's cold and snowy you can hardly keep up with the cattle coming home. However, you are wet and cold as a cowboy! When it's hot the cattle walk much slower and are in no hurry to get home but you are at least warm and dry, so pick you poison because you just never know. This was really a great trip and a great week. Thanks.