

Well, February has come and gone and we are still waiting for FEMA to come take care of our natural disaster. February has been cold, snowy and lots of wind which makes for anything but pleasant calving conditions. Add to that a bunch of heifers that are synchronized and you have a recipe for a train wreck. The heifers calved over a 20 day period which was to be expected. About 70% of them calved in a week of the most brutal weather conditions I have ever encountered. I hate to say it but the weather made last September's trip look like a day at the beach. It wasn't that we had so much snow but we had cold northern wind chill which made many nights of 20-30 below. You can imagine how long a new, wet calf can last in those conditions. Many calves had to do a little "Cowboy Hot Tubbin" just to get started. It's 2:00am and you find a calf laying out prone, just about dead from the cold. You grab him and throw him over your shoulder and run up the hill towards the house as fast as you can go. Now, with this calf over your shoulder and the warm side of your face melting the frozen corral residue, your ear gets packed full of whatever was on the calf. The bright spot is that it's all organic!! Anyway, you burst into the house, head to the laundry room, where the big wash tub is and fill it with hot water. Then plunge the frozen calf into the tub. With your 12 layers on and your arm in the tub of 100 degree water; the sweat starts to roll off of you. The trick is to get the layers off without dropping the calf's head. He is so cold he wouldn't even be able to raise his head above the water. In about 10 minutes the water has cooled off, so you drain the tub, run down the stairs, get Taylor up to come hold the calf. Then you refill the tub, throw your 12 layers back on and head back to the barn for another check. Now of course on your way back to the barn, you realize just how much water you splashed on yourself putting the calf in the tub, instantly your coat and pants get stiff with ice. I can say a frozen coat does shed the wind pretty well. The two worst days of the storm I had a total of 35 calves. It was a disaster to say the least. I'm sure it has to be the fault of the government somehow!!

Here are a couple of short close calls that I got to experience during the calving season. Matter of fact, when I look back on it I'm damn lucky to be able to relate these two stories to you. It was two days before the big storm and Taylor and I were moving a few of the new pairs to another pasture. I was horseback and Taylor was afoot. This one particular heifer had exhibited a nasty attitude when she had calved a couple of days earlier. Generally, it's just hormones and a couple of days later they are back to being cautious around humans. Well, anyway, she threw caution out the window and exhibited a major case of PMS. (Protective mother syndrome) Her calf was standing under a Box Elder tree, so I stepped off my horse and pushed him out from under the tree. Now the day she had calved it was 50 degrees with Chinook winds. We had water running everywhere and then it turned cold, so now we had ice everywhere. She snorted and came at me and I did the natural thing and took off running. Now I was real fast for 30 feet, but at 30 foot 6 inches she hit me. She propelled me forward onto my shoulder. I slid on the ice several feet out in front of her. I hit the ice skidding and decided that it

was time to put it in overdrive to get the hell out of there. The only problem was that she had put it in overdrive before I did. I started to get up and was about half way up when she hit me again. This is the point in time where everything becomes crystal clear and in slow motion. As I was sliding across the ice I remember thinking, I need some help here, then thinking, I don't want Taylor over here. The next thought was, I better curl up and take my beating, hoping that she wouldn't fall on me and crush me in the process. I could hear her hooves churning on the ice as she was charging at me for the third time. She probably would have killed me had it not been for Maverik. As Taylor was standing there watching all of this open mouthed, from about 30 yards away, Maverik attacked the heifer. He bit her on the left side right in front of the flank. I have never seen Maverik be that aggressive. She spun to take on the dog, which allowed me, to scramble to my feet or knees, I'm not sure which. I got the hell out of there! Anyway, I guess I owe Maverik again. It really wasn't until that night that I started to realize how sore I was from all this cow lovin. Yep, I sure have a good life!!

The next story really wasn't anymore than a little cowboy square dance in a stall with a heifer at midnight. Now how many people have had the chance to do a Do-Si-Do and a allemande left with a heifer in the middle of the night in a box stall? Yep, I sure have a good life!! It was way below zero and this heifer seemed to be having a little calving problem and was going to need some assistance. Now the calf didn't appear that big from the size of his feet. I thought maybe I could get in the stall, put the chains on the feet and with my OB hooks, give her just enough assistance to bring the calf into this deep freeze without putting her in the head catch. The head catch is outside, under the overhang of the barn. It was a heat wave in the barn compared to outside. It was at least zero degrees in the barn. Something about pulling a calf that time of night, outside, just didn't really appeal to me. Maybe it had more to do with the fact that I had had only had about 4 hours sleep over the last 3 days and they were in increments of about 40 minutes. I wasn't real sharp in the thought process. In a drawer full of knives I was definitely the butter knife. Anyway, I stepped into the stall and she jumps up. So far it was as normal as could be. You get in the middle of the stall and let her circle around you as you slowly try to slip the end of the chain around one front foot. As she gets used to you being there, after several revolutions around the stall, they start to slow down and generally a contraction will take over. While they are having this contraction they will stop momentarily and that is when you put the first chain on and step behind her and put on a big pull in conjunction with the contraction. This I did and everything went as it was supposed to. The foot with the chain on it came out to just about to the knee. This told me the calf was very pull able. All I needed was to get the other end of the 24 inch long chain on the other foot. I was sure that the elbow of the other foot was hung up slightly on the pelvis and once I got it straightened out the pull would be easy. I held open the end of the chain with my right hand, while holding the OB hook in my left, keeping some tension on the other leg. Now this is where things started to go wrong. The chain was freezing to my hand so bad, that I reached over and slipped my leather glove on my right hand and started the process all over. At about this time the heifer decided to start walking around the stall again. This is not abnormal or a problem, you let them walk until you get both ends of the chain on the two feet. Next you get behind them and put some pressure on, which generally starts a contraction. Once the contraction hits, you step behind them and pull as hard as you can. Lots of time they will then lie down so you

can use your legs to increase the assistance. Well, none of this happened. Yep, I have a good life!! At this point went to her left in a circle with me in the middle. She decided it's time to start kicking the hell out of me. She would take about two steps and kick. She managed to land two solid blows which obviously weren't enough to pacify her. I tried to stand out of the way so she couldn't connect, while trying to reach across her to get the chain on the other leg while still holding the OB hook with my left hand. With me standing outside of her kicking arc she decided to charge me instead. I guess she heard someone say allemande left, so she charged all men on her left (that would be me). Now as this was all taking place, the open chain in my right hand popped over my wrist. Now I was chained to this mad piece of beef, in a stall, in the middle of the night, by myself. With my leather glove on my right hand I couldn't shake the chain off of my wrist because of the frozen cuff of the glove. The situation was suddenly serious. I knew if she knocked me down the results were not going to be pleasant. It was obvious; it was either her or me. I did the only thing that I could do to save myself. I had to keep her from hitting me which meant I had to keep her butt pulled over to me. The only way to do this was by pulling the calf towards me. It was just like driving a car in a skid, you have to turn into the skid to keep some control. Now pulling the calf towards me, to keep her from knocking me down, meant that all the pressure was on the one leg that had the chain on it. This of course shattered the leg but there was no other option. After about 5 times of this she finally stopped, which allowed me to get myself unchained from the heifer and the chain on the other foot. At this point she lay down and I finished pulling the calf. The calf had to be disposed of but at least he didn't have to put up with the 30 below weather.

The number of ears and noses that have been frozen are many. Most everything born during that storm will lose some of both. We won't know for a couple of weeks how many will have to be disposed of because of frozen feet. Time will tell. I have lots of noses that have big scabs on them. One calf has sloughed off a piece of hide about half the size of a dollar bill right over his knee. I won't know for several days if the frozen tissue is all the damage or whether it has gone on into the bone. I have another one who has a spot on his brisket about as big as a silver dollar where the hide has fallen off. Time will tell.

Well the Longhorns continue to be a pain in the butt. Every time it snows, or storms, the longhorns jump the fence and go into the old barn down by the old house. It is rather comical to go down after a storm and see their great big horns sticking out of the door of the old barn. The cattle in that pasture are getting the best hay and I certainly don't want to feed those steers that good quality hay. They certainly aren't dumb. I had a great idea for them, or at least I think it's a great idea. I think George and Allen need a life size mount for the front of their business. Now think about this for a moment, Allen could call his business "Al's Longhorn Electric". Now what would be better advertising than having a full size steer standing out front? George could advertise his construction as Texas size construction. They would soon be the talk of the East Coast. They both could boast that they rode a Greyhound west, and a Longhorn Steer east. Now I know this sounds like a Texas sized story but you need to think about it. I've got a better idea, let's put it up for a vote. All in favor of George and Allen taking two of the Longhorns say aye!!

With all of the wind we had one of the big cottonwood trees at the Double Rafter blow over. I'm convinced again of divine intervention since it missed the power line coming into the house and the house. Now what are the chances of a tree that size missing everything and falling all the way to the ground. The tree is really huge when it's lying in the yard. We are headed up today with the chainsaw to start cutting it up. It would be nice to be able to say that we will have it done in an afternoon, but I know better. Those trees are all over a100 years old. I know we won't have to cut firewood for any of the trips. Brendon and Erin are getting married at the ranch in June. With everything that needs done on the ranch once spring arrives we only have about 3 weeks to get the whole thing cut up. I know I am going to have to borrow or rent a bigger chain saw for the bottom 50 foot of that tree. My little saw just won't hack it. I wonder if you can rent Beavers somewhere?

Everything is on track (notice I didn't say schedule) for the upcoming summer. Setting up camp in June is going to be a real challenge since we have a lot to do in there this year and a very short window of opportunity to get it done. We are taking in our Bear Boxes that Kimberly Michaelis designed. Taylor is building a special cart in ag shop that we can pull with a saddle horse. It will be a job to get them in there but it is going to make things so much easier for the cooks. And if the cook ain't happy~~ ~~ well you know the rest. We also will have a brand new cook tent to pack in and set up since the snowstorm last fall completely ruined the last tent. We had to burn it when Bob Main and myself got back in there to close up camp in November. Then on top of that, we have at least one and maybe two water tanks to put in. The problem with all of this is that we can't start any of this until we can drive into the Little Horn Cow Camp. The snow drifts at Big Baldy don't melt a lot of times until around the 17th of June. That of course doesn't give us much time to get all of this done. I will probably have to tap several high school kids to get this all accomplished. Most high school kids will work their tails off if you are willing to feed them and then actually throw in a daily wage. The only problem is most high school kids are only gullable one time. I am certain that Alice and I stopped having kids too soon.

The summer season looks full and eventful to say the least. We do have room on the clean up ride for anyone that might be interested and wants something a little different from the normal cattle drives. Last year we took a day and rode the Dry Fork. I sent Randy and the guests up the Dry Fork. They did find one yearling. The elk were in full rut and the people really had a great day. So as we have said in the past, "This trip is wide open as to what we will do".

I better go get the chainsaw sharpened so I'm going to call it a printable story.

Dana