

## RUMINANT DIGEST #15 2-1-09

Since my wife is in San Francisco this week and generally proof reads everything I put out, you will just have to read it and deal with it.

Well everyone has heard of watching the animals to tell what time of day it is or what the weather will be. On the Rafter we have a sure fire method of knowing when winter is coming and planning on staying. We had several snow storms during the fall and some cold weather, but they all blew in one or two days, and then warmed up. The day before we left for Christmas, we filled all of the self feeders for the cattle because we were going to be gone for about 2 weeks. The weather temperatures had plummeted to 15 below, but we hadn't had a lot of snow yet. The night before we left, the phone rang and it was Kathy Barker and she said "I think the Longhorns are on their way home". Sure enough, the next morning here were the five of them standing at the full self feeder, terribly proud of themselves and enjoying the buffet they had found. With 6 inches of fresh snow and high projected for the day of 2 below zero, the Longhorns weather forecasting had said to come home. The fact that there were several fences to jump and the interstate to go under was not a factor in the lead Longhorns decision. I wonder if they have a sensor in the tip of their horns. At least they were considerate enough to jump the fences and not tear them up. When you are that size the fences apparently aren't much of a hurdle. While we were gone it stayed below zero with highs in the single digits and another major storm blew in, dumping an additional 9 inches of snow. Because of the 5 more 1800 pound hay burners at the self feeders, the cattle soon emptied the self feeders and we had only been gone about 5 days. My great neighbor, Bob Main who I will forever be indebted to, borrowed a pickup with a bale feeder on it and filled the feeders for me. My pickup with the bale feeder on it, was in the shop while we were gone having a new clutch put in. He attempted to use my tractor, but my tractor is one of those Russian tractors that will only run if you drink Vodka or can swear in Russian. I've learned to do both! There are some real tricks to starting it. All by design of course! When he called me, I told him that if he was going to use my tractor then he was going to have to go sit on the tractor and call me, and I would try and talk him through the steps of starting it. I've owned it about 15 years and unless you have operated one, you will never figure out how to start it.

### **The Wedding:**

My niece Chelsie got married the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Jan so when we flew back from Florida to Billings, we then drove 9 hours north from there to Kalispel for the wedding. Since our flight plans were jumbled, we were going to have to take two vehicle's to Kalispel. When we had flown to Florida, the plan was that Alice would fly back to Omaha with her parents and then from there to Billings. We were going to get into Billings Thursday night and Alice wouldn't get in until 11:30am on Friday. However, due to health issues my inlaws weren't able to join us in Florida. Alice then changed her flight into Billings and arrived at midnight on Thursday instead of Friday. Trent, Taylor, Ali and Daniel loaded into the suburban early Friday morning and started the nine hour drive north.

Alice and I started about an hour behind them. We had traveled about 7 hours north, when we went by what looked like our suburban pulling back onto the interstate. They waved and I watched to see if there was anything wrong. My parents had also caught up with them and were following them back onto the interstate so I thought maybe it was just a potty stop. As I went by they frantically waved, so I pulled over and stopped. Trent got out of the suburban and said there is something not right. Anytime I get above 50 there is a clunking that starts. "You drive it for a while and listen to it". I started up the interstate and as soon as I hit about 45 I heard the clunking. I slowed down to where I couldn't hear it anymore and continued on towards Missoula. Pretty soon I heard it at 45 so I slowed down some more until the clunking went away. I knew it was something major, just wasn't sure what. We were about 30 miles out of Missoula so I kept limping along. Every time I would hear the clunking I would slow down some more and continue. Pretty soon we were down to 30 mile an hour to keep the clumping from showing up. We limped into a Missoula GM dealership and left the suburban, loading everyone's luggage into Mom's outfit and our other outfit and continued on north to the wedding. I asked the service manager if the shop worked on Saturdays and he said not, but they would get on it first thing Monday morning, and if they had the parts, might have it ready to go Monday night. Since I had heard the noise I wasn't very optimistic that it would be ready. However, we had another option to getting it home if it wasn't ready Monday. My brother Krayton had been reelected to the state house and was taking the oath of office at the state capital in Helena on Monday morning. My folks were staying over and going to attend the swearing in ceremony. If the vehicle was ready on Monday they would drive over and spend Monday night there and leave first thing Tuesday morning with both vehicles. Murphy's law interceded though, and the vehicle wasn't going to be ready until at least the following week. The transfer case had to have major surgery and the parts wouldn't be in for at least 6 days. Two weeks later Alice and I headed to Missoula to pick up the stranded suburban. Nine hours up and nine hours back and of course a stop at Costco, so the return trip was closer to 12 hours.

### **Family and crew news:**

There really isn't a lot to mention here which is a good thing I guess. Mom and Dad are doing fine and dad is still working 50 hours a week with the Methane companies. Randy Barney had to have neck surgery again and had a couple vertebrae's in his neck fused together. This is the second time he has had it done since the first one wasn't successful. Which he tells me isn't that uncommon. I think his first one was done about 2 years ago. He of course is laid off work right now, and thinks he will be out another 6 weeks. It's hell getting old!

Stan has recovered from breaking his ankle in a Harley accident last summer. It really wasn't Stan's fault but we're going to blame him anyway. He and his wife Sue pulled away from the curb in a parking lot and not too far away was a parked van. As they passed by the van a car came out from behind it. At 15 mph Stan laid the bike over to keep from hitting the car. Sue wasn't hurt at all but Stan broke his ankle. They thought it was a sprain and didn't realize until the following week when he got home and had it x-rayed that it was broken.

Taylor had a partial dislocation of his shoulder right before Christmas. He went after a loose ball during the first minute of the game and has been in a brace ever since.

Fortunately the MRI showed that surgery wasn't going to be needed. However, basketball might be over for the year. I jokingly told the doctor that I hoped it didn't interfere with his riding bucking horses, and the doctor got real serious and said he didn't think riding bucking horses was probably a good idea. Taylor and I thought it was funnier than the doctor did.

Daniel has gone back to school for the spring semester. I am glad to see him continuing to work on getting his degree. I do believe that he will be joining us again next summer. I do question his intelligence because he is taking a horse shoeing class. My back is already feeling better!!

Tyler is at the university working on his engineering degree.

Brendon is in his second year of law school and will be here this summer.

Alice is still teaching and very involved in everything that goes on in the school if it has anything to do with kids. Her parents have been having some health issues so she has made several trips to Omaha to assist them. Her mother had knee replacement surgery and it has been a real struggle.

Trent is still on the ranch and getting ready to start buying yearlings for next year's upcoming wild cow chase!

Meg informed us this fall that last year was her last cattle drive. She said physically it's just too much! We will certainly miss her, but I also understand.

I'm doing fine but as I've gotten older I notice a few changes here and there. One of the big ones, is that my kids are now hiding horses from me, that they don't want me to ride. When I get to the corral it's "He ducked back just as we were coming into the corral, or, I already turned him out, or I'm sorry, I didn't know you wanted to ride him today! I guess I'm lucky that they are taking care of me. It's hard to accept that maybe you shouldn't ride those kind of horses when you have been doing it your whole life.

One of our past guests was impressed with Chris Ellsworth enough to invite him to come east and do a horsemanship clinic. He headed east with his horse in early December and other than getting into ice storms, both going and coming across Iowa he had a successful venture. When I asked him about it he said he is headed back again to do another one, only it will be in the spring and never in the winter again. I would like to thank Denise Corder for her encouragement and doing the ground work for the clinic. Chris is as good as anybody in the country and I wish him continued success. If you want to attend one of his clinics just give me a call and I will be sure and get you in contact with him.

### **Guardian Update:**

Last spring I was elected chairman of the Guardians and it just added another layer of demands on my time, but this really isn't about my time, it's about my kid's future and a life style that I so believe in. The greatest gift that God bestowed upon me, is my wife and kids. The only way to preserve that for future generations is through grass roots groups like the Guardians of the Range. The second greatest gift is the Cattle Drives. You people have made it possible for me to keep my family together and allowed us to spend lots of time enjoying the hard life of ranching. The issues facing us are a challenge, and an uphill battle. When I sent out the email last week of the two wolves I certainly got some hate mail in return. I wasn't trying to offend anyone, just make people aware of some of the obstacles we face. Most people think ranchers just sit back, sell their cattle once a year and rake in the money. They don't understand that this

is a business, and one of the biggest obstacles we have in our business is Mother Nature. Mother Nature can be really cruel, beyond anything you can imagine if you haven't witnessed it. By the same token Mother Nature also provides all of the essentials that we need to survive in our business. Agriculture people were the first and probably the only true environmentalist by nature. Even I, don't want to see the wolf exterminated to the point of extinction, but this was never about a species being threatened by extinction. I know a ex rancher who had a permit over by Yellowstone and he finally gave it back to the Forest Service because his losses were so large from the wolf and grizzly bear, that they just couldn't justify the losses on an annual basis. He is now a college professor in one of the junior colleges in the state. He didn't get any reimbursement for his loss of the grass that he turned back to the Forest Service. He had to change his life to teaching and raising a few cattle on the side as best he could. We as ranchers just want to do what we love to do, raise our families, pay our bills, and work in a lifestyle that we passionately love until we die. Most ranchers don't even really believe in retirement.

The Guardians are one tool in our hopes to preserve our life style and thanks to you joining us on the cattle drives, you are helping us preserve a life style, so that my kids have the option of raising their kids in the hard life style called ranching if they so choose.

I also wish to thank those who have joined our organization to continue the battle for our way of life. Your membership is greatly appreciated!! We would also welcome any new members at whatever rate you feel comfortable with. The membership is tax deductible and will go to preserving the cattle drives.

**Tally:**

We had a first this year and that was we tallied out every animal. I have never had that happen especially with a bunch of yearlings. Generally there is 2-5 that we just never account for. I did end up having to drive over the mountain to get 3 yearlings that went off the other side. Naturally, they weren't gathered at the same time, so I had to make two separate trips. On the second trip I backed up to the coral and went back to open up the trailer gate to load Miss Walker and discovered my back tire and rim on the trailer were completely gone. Obviously the lugs had come slightly loose and the movement of the rim worked a whole through the rim. I lost the tire, rim and the dust cap. I wasn't overly upset about the rim but it was a good tire, and we don't always have a lot of those on trailers. As I buy new tires for the pickup, the old tires get set aside for the trailer. I had gone through all of the used pickup tires and actually had bought a new one in June and of course this is the one that took a little road trip on it's own. There was too much damage done to the lugs to be able to put the spare on. Anyway, I loaded Miss Walker and went back over the mountain on 3 tires. Every time I saw a tire laying in someone else's field or in the ditch, I stopped and looked but didn't have any luck. I did get some rather strange looks and people pointing fingers at me, but I just smiled and kept on going.

**09 Season:**

We have made a few changes for the upcoming season as always. We now have beds available on the Two Beef Roundups, and the Customized Cowboy Camp for a fee. Since we don't move camp on these trips we can offer this luxury. The beds will be in a wall tent with carpet on the floor and you will actually have real sheets. Your back might really think that's a big improvement. We also have the shower problem solved so that

you can feel human on a more regular basis. Not that I like human, but I have it figured this way. If you shower and I don't, by the end of the week you will be paying me to shower. Now that's true entrepreneurship, create a need and fill it. We still have some room, on some trips, so give us a call. If the Aug Beef Roundup might appeal to you call Mary Keating (1-845-416-7001) and visit with her. She is a many times past guest and is putting together this trip at a special discount price for repeat people. I'm looking forward to the upcoming season and getting to see many of you again. Another great thing about the trips is that it isn't below zero, so how can you not like it!! There is not a better place to spend the week than on the mountain. So crawl into your boots, take a deep breath and give us a call. We would love to torture you for a week in God's Country.

Well the new season has started for us. We just signed a contract on the purchase of 400 yearlings. It's the first purchase and there will be others to follow. Thanks.

### **COWBOY & COMPUTER LINGO**

I don't have a clue what the computer lingo is but I will share a few cowboy definitions:

Last July when I got bucked off in front of 25 people I discovered that I had been down loaded, not bucked off.

I also discovered when I got downloaded, "That horse has one hell of a Jump Drive".

I have also discovered that when riding Rose, she has one hell of a Hard Drive. As she stops and turns off of her front end your tonsils get a personal introduction to your spine.

I was riding up the trail when the horse stopped, gathered himself, raised his tail and you have a PDF. Pile of Dung Forming

The horse at the bottom of the string in the pecking order has MEGABYTES.

I dIdn't kNōw I wās SūcH A tEcHiE !!!

**HAVE YOU SEEN THE LEGISLATION BEING INTRODUCED IN 18 STATES TO CODE ALL AMUNITION, SO THE FEDS WILL KNOW HOW MUCH YOU BOUGHT, AND WHAT CALIBER?**

**DANA**

