

## **RUMINANT DIGEST #16 Dec. 1<sup>st</sup> 09**

This is a rather lengthy letter, but my writing is just like my circles. My intentions are to be back at camp by mid afternoon but it generally just gets dark too early. I start writing and my dull life turns into a rather long story. It just seems to take me a long time to write the story.

I do want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Praise the lord for another day and the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of life. We must all count our blessings as we have many. One of our biggest blessings has been the cattle drives, so I want to thank all of you for enriching our lives.

### **CREW NEWS:**

The big family news is that both Tyler and Trent are getting married this summer. Of course that is not to each other!! Tyler and Jill are getting married June 12<sup>th</sup> at the Rafter and Trent and Ali are getting married Aug 7<sup>th</sup>. We are very excited for both of them and think it will be good for both of them. As it stands right now Trent and Ali will be going to Europe on their honeymoon. With the way the summer appears to be playing out there won't be a scheduled Aug Beef Roundup this year. We will have to have the flexibility to just go do the move as time appears. I also lose my cooks sometime around the third week in August. I promise, you don't want me to do the cooking!! Consequently no scheduled Aug Beef Roundup this year.

As many of you know, Chelsie got married last January. Well, they are expecting their first one in late July. I'm so happy for them! Taylor is a senior in high school and looking at several different schools. He will probably be looking at engineering as a major. Brendon is in his last year of law school and can't wait to get out. Erin is still teaching and supporting him while he is in law school. I do worry about Brendon a little bit, because he thinks digging post holes is more fun than law school. They are doing great! Mom and Dad are doing just fine, as both still have their health. Mom and Dad are still very busy with the methane industry. Dad is having an affair with his secretary, but that is okay, because it's mom. As long as he doesn't take up golf I guess there is nothing to worry about.

### **JULY BEEF ROUNDUP:**

If you are looking for something a little different this year, than what we have ever done, the July Beef Roundup has it. We are going to do a full moon ride this year. If you haven't seen a full moon on the mountain you are missing something special. The plan is that we will have dinner at Lake Creek, then after dark and the full moon has risen, we will saddle up and ride to Rock Cabin Park. It will take about 4 hours to ride down to Rock Cabin and the sights we will see on a full moon are entirely different than anything you can see in the daytime. We will spend the night, have a leisure breakfast the next morning and gather cattle on the way back the next day. The full moon on the mountain is absolutely a new must see when you get to experience it from the back of a horse at

9,000 feet. If people are quiet as we ride down, you should see more wildlife than you can imagine. We should see elk, deer, coyotes and could very well see a bear. Watch it be rainy and foggy all week!

### KRAYTON'S BOOK:

As most of you know my brother Krayton is in the Montana House. (that doesn't mean big house like the state pen). He is a veterinarian and was involved in the cattle drives for 10-12 years before he decided he had more on his plate than he cared to digest. That's when he sold it to me. He has written a book and it is available on his web site [kraytonkerns.org](http://kraytonkerns.org). The stories in the book are all short, about 2 pages in length. The stories are of his life experiences from as far back as he can remember. His writing is always written with humor and then finishes off with a political point. Many of the stories center around our childhood and being raised on the ranch. It certainly has brought back many memories and chuckles for me. They would make a good Christmas gift for someone who has been on the cattle drives and knows the family. Yes, we are as bonkers as any family and the cattle drives prove it.

### WEB SITE:

We would like to update our testimonials page so if anyone out there who would like to send us a testimonial we would be glad to put it on the web site. One other quick point, there are several people who fill in their email address on our registration, but their spam blocker won't let me through, so if you hear about the newsletter and don't receive it, that is probably the reason. Jerry Wiseman and Russ Tuthill for starters.

### SUMMER 2010:

The summer is shaping up to be another good one. It's always amazing to watch the bookings from one year to the next. One year there is lots of demand for a certain trip and the next year very little, and it never stays the same. All but one of the trips are just a phone call or two away from being filled. If you haven't decided just yet, I wouldn't wait until green grass to make a decision.

Trent and I met with the Forest Service right before Thanksgiving doing a summary of last years grazing season. There weren't any surprises as we knew the places that had been overgrazed and yes, they reinforced that point. Last summer due to a cash donation by a Guardian Member, who has been on our cattle drives, we were able to put in a new water development. We put in over a mile of plastic pipe to a drainage that didn't have any water but plenty of feed. Brendon and Trent did most of the project and the Forest Service was so impressed by the effort on our part and the job that was done, that they have approved another water development on our allotment for this summer. This really goes back to the anonymous donor making the first project a reality. I can't thank this person enough for everything she has done. This next development will allow us to develop water in another area that is off the creek and the riparian areas.

### GUARDIANS OF THE RANGE:

Anyone who has been on our trips has heard about this group from me. I have been involved since the inception and serve on the board of directors. The board is all

ranchers who are fighting for our very livelihood. If we lose the right to graze public lands we are out of business. When I say out of business, I don't just mean the cattle drives, I also mean the ranch. We are right in the middle of a battle right now with a group of tree huggers who wants congress to designate more of the Big Horn Mountains as wilderness. If you want to destroy an area just designate it wilderness. All of a sudden you have thousands of people visiting it daily. I don't believe seeing anything in the Lewis and Clark diaries about seeing thousands of people on their trip west into the wilderness. Matter of fact, just how many people have any of you seen during one of our weeks on the cattle drives. If you get ¼ mile off the road, you see no one. We are not a wilderness area. We are open to the world 7 days a week, year round. I went to the Wilderness area once in the Big Horns. That was 35 years ago. There were so damn many people everywhere, that I will never go back. If you want to **destroy it, designate it!**

When you are raising a family and trying to make a living in a moral, legal and ethical business, you shouldn't have to worry about some tree hugger putting you out of business.

Most of you probably noticed on your final billing, I asses everyone \$20 and it goes straight to the Guardians as a way to keep us functioning. Our executive director is brilliant, but not cheap, nor should she be. The Guardians are a 501 c 3 so any donations or membership is tax deductible. If you would like to help, go to our web site [www.guardiansoftherange.com](http://www.guardiansoftherange.com) and you can join up and help us, just read about us, or just make a donation. I can't express how grateful we are for all who have joined our effort. Like all grassroots organizations, we can always use more membership. We also have a endowment fund, if that might interest you for a long term gift.

## THE CLEAN UP CLEAN UP RIDE:

. Since it's snowing like hell outside, I thought it would be a good time to get started on a ranch update. We just got rid of the last of the yearlings (or all that we can find anyway) on Friday November 27<sup>th</sup>. We have had a real nice November here in the valley. October set the record for the coldest October on record with single digit lows the 9<sup>th</sup> of October. We were shipping yearlings the 10<sup>th</sup> and were scurrying around like mad to try and find all the yearlings and didn't have time to take care of the normal fall duties like draining the yard pump. Yes, I now have a cracked yard pump. Since we had single digit lows the night before delivery, the yearlings came in lighter, because they didn't really feel like standing in water, in 8 degrees, while it was snowing. That alone probably cost us \$10 dollars a head on 355 animals.

After delivery we were short about 14 yearlings. Where to start looking? We knew some of the neighbors had a few and were planning on gathering the following week, so we waited to see how many they had. It snowed off and on the whole next week, so most of the neighbors postponed their gather until the weather stabilized. While we didn't get much snow in the valley, there was around 2 feet of the white stuff at Lake Creek. Bob Main drove in the first week of hunting season. With 4 chains on and the snow still light and fluffy, they made it in. The next morning they decided to drive up the road behind the cabin. They made it all of 50 yards before they were pushing snow up over the hood of the pickup. They decided elk hunting from the Parkman Bar sounded like a really

good idea. It was also obvious that the elk didn't want any part of that high country either.

**October 26<sup>th</sup>.** The weather had finally stabilized enough that I figured I had better get back to the mountain and look for the cow and calf that we had last seen in Lake Creek, on the first day of the Clean Up Ride, Sept 27<sup>th</sup>. Trent had to help a neighbor that day, so I headed to the mountain by myself to see if I could find her. I figured she had probably left Lake Creek and headed on north past Rubber Boot Park. I figured if I put 4 chains on, and with the elk hunters driving around hunting, I might be able to pull the trailer to the horse pasture and ride from there. I never made it to the horse pasture. I got within 3 miles of camp before I had it buried in a snow bank. I was able to back up, but in those types of conditions you have very little control over your trailer. First I had the trailer in the right hand ditch, then in the left hand ditch. That was probably a blessing, because if I could have controlled it, I only had 3 miles to back up, before having a spot wide enough to turn around.

I unhooked from the trailer and without the added weight of the trailer, and 4 chains on was able to pull away from the trailer and get the pickup turned around. Now the trick was going to be getting back by the trailer which was stuck diagonal across the road. I really wasn't concerned, I had Alice's trusty scoop shovel, the only problem was she wasn't there to show me how to use it. I dug down to bare ground on the shoulder and ditch of the road, and was able to drive by the trailer. Now I only had one slight problem, what to do with the trailer and horse that were headed the wrong direction. I mulled it over and decided that if I backed up parallel to the trailer, hooked a chain to the bumper, and the gooseneck hookup of the trailer and drove away, the trailer would pivot on the 5<sup>th</sup> wheel and we would all be headed in the same direction. It worked perfectly. It only took about 2 hours of shoveling. There was only one slight glitch; it was too late in the day to make a ride looking for the cow and calf. It would be well after dark by the time I got to the country that I suspected the pair were in. So I headed home. When I arrived home, Trent said he had talked to a hunter who had seen 6 yearlings around Dead Calf reservoir the 10<sup>th</sup> of October. It's now 2 weeks later. He said he hadn't called because he wasn't sure who they belonged to. **YOU NEVER LEAVE CATTLE ON THE MOUNTAIN THAT TIME OF YEAR!!!** Call someone, anyone!! If I see someone shop lift in his store I'll just say I didn't know if maybe he had given someone the okay to take it. We spend a lot of dollars in his store buying fuel during the course of the summer. (usually over \$3,000.00) I wonder if he will make the connection if I go out of business. As you can tell it touched a slight nerve. The financial loss of course is a consideration, but I feel so bad for the animal that starves to death.

**November,** Trent and I decided since we couldn't drive into camp, the thing to do was to ride from the highway into camp. Dad went up with us and unloaded us on the highway. With two pack horses, loaded with groceries, alfalfa cubes, and dog food for three days we headed up Fishhook Creek, over the top into the head of Ice Creek, then down into Lake Creek and on into camp. You definitely want your tallest and strongest horses for these types of circles. You felt like you were riding into a land of white that had never been inhabited by anyone. With the wind blowing and the snow swirling, there is no visible sign of life anywhere. It is so hard to dress for the extreme change from the valley to the mountain that time of year. We left the valley around 5:30am and got into

camp a little after noon. Several times riding in, the horses floundered in the deep snow. It wasn't bad unless you were in the lead. Trent and I swapped leading about every ¼ mile to try and save our horses as much as possible. With the wind blowing, the surfaces look very smooth, but you know every hole and low spot is drifted full of snow. Trent was riding Hoot and she stepped into a washout and went to lunging to try and get out of the every increasing depth of the snow. She finally exhausted herself and just laid there. While she was regaining her strength Trent stepped off. Once Trent was off and she caught her breath, she was finally able to struggle on through. Gunner was the pack horse coming next and he did the same thing. He floundered until exhausted, then laid there to rest. Once rested he went to struggling and made it through the 4 foot deep snow drift. We hadn't known it was that deep, until Hoot stepped off into it. You do ride puckered every step of the way as you just don't know what you are stepping off into. While I knew none of the snow banks were over 15 feet deep, we didn't know how many might be 5 or 6 feet deep. As I sat there and watched Hoot and Gunner struggle through the snow drift, I just couldn't see any sense for me to ride off into it. It certainly took longer but I was able to swing high and finally find away around the drift. Trent's horses were both very glad to stop and rest while I found my way back to them.

Once we got to camp, we put the pack horses in the corral, unloaded our packs into the cabin and headed north. There were sure lots of Moose tracks around, but no cow tracks. Both dogs went with me and I noticed they certainly weren't as rambunctious as they had been earlier in the day. The snow was knee deep everywhere, and deeper in the areas that the wind hadn't gotten to. In the timber, the snow was relatively soft but since the wind couldn't get to it, it was about 6 inches deeper. As you ride through the empty, eerily quiet timber, you come to the realization that if you do anything dumb, you might not survive to tell about it. The Rubber Boot Ridge splits, running north towards the Dry Fork. Trent took one ridge and I the other. Both Trent and I went north until we had about an hour of daylight left. My best guess is that we had ridden about 5 miles since splitting up. With about an hour of daylight left it was time to head back, since there were several blow downs to ride around, they might prove to be real challenging in the dark. When stepping over the snow covered down fall, you never knew what you were stepping into on the other side. By now Murphy was packing one leg and whimpering. Maverick was no longer following my horse, but was trying to stay in the heavy timber under the trees, as the snow wasn't as deep right next to the base of the trees. He would disappear for 20 minutes at a time, trying to find his way in shallow snow areas. There was no choice but to keep going. I was sure Six Moons wouldn't think very kindly of additional passengers. I arrived back to camp several hours after dark, fed my horse and started dinner, hoping Trent would show up shortly with good news that he had found the cow and calf. He arrived in camp about 40 minutes behind me, but with the same results. No sign of cattle anywhere, but two very exhausted horses and two dogs that just dropped once they got in the cabin. They actually got the best deal out of the whole trip, after that I left them in the cabin. We had packed horses instead of Mules, so that we would have fresh horses. We were headed to Sardine Lake the next day and if we hadn't had fresh horses, I think we would have had to call off the circle.

The next morning we left early for Sardine Lake. Generally we can ride to Sardine in an easy 2 hours, it took 4 ½ hours this time. Many times going up hill in the deep snow, we would step off of our horses and lead them through to try and preserve every ounce of

extra energy we could. One thing about the snow, if cattle were there they were going to leave tracks. With the deep snow, they also weren't going to wander from one drainage to the next, the snow was just too tough. We got to the big park just outside Sardine and it became obvious immediately, that there were some cattle there somewhere. We found 3 head about 200yds from Sardine Lake. They were really drawn up and gaunt. They obviously hadn't had much to eat or drink for some time. It's around 1:00pm and we have a decision to make. It was either all the way back up country to the end of the Little Horn rim, or off the Kerns Joslyn trail with the three yearlings. They didn't look like they were strong enough to walk through the deep snow to the end of the Little Horn rim. Trent took the lead, breaking a trail through the snow, giving the yearlings something to follow. I fell in behind the yearlings. They didn't seem too excited about anything, including walking through the snow. Once we started off the trail, the cattle followed Trent's trail in the snow real well, until we got to the first switchback. Of course that's where the trail starts getting steep! That's when the yearlings decided they wanted nothing to do with us. On those steep snow covered hill sides, we had to bail off our horses and outrun them afoot, to turn them back to the trail. We did manage to get them off the mountain into the parks but it was a real fight. With only 3 head, and two dogs in the cabin, I was sure glad we didn't have 50, as I'm not sure we could have done it. It's not nice to make an old fat man run up and down those mountain sides. We kicked them into the park above Robinson Crossing. There was lot's of old feed and the 3 yearlings just dropped their heads and went to stuffing themselves. We left them there with the idea of coming back the next day and trailing them out of the canyon. In the lower park we were below the snow line. There was snow in all the shaded areas, but the areas out in the sun were bare. They probably hadn't been eating much more than pine needles for weeks. We headed back to camp up through the Little Horn and Green Cabin so we could see some more country, and of course, it was way after dark, when we rode into camp at Lake Creek on some very exhausted horses. We were about 100 yards from the corrals and out of the corner of my eye in the moonlight, I saw something grey sprint towards the timber. When I looked, there was nothing there. My first thought was that the horses had gotten out of the corrals during the day, and that it was Hoot who I had seen. Then I realized, she wouldn't have run off into the timber like that. As we rode up to the corral, there were our two fresh horses standing there waiting to be fed. . It had to be a moose that I had seen, but I wasn't really sure. Because it was grey I really wasn't sure what I'd seen.

The next day we rerode all of the Sardine Country again and headed off the Kerns Joslyn trail into the Little Horn to pick up the 3 yearlings and head home. Sounds pretty simple, but nothing is ever simple on that mountain. When we arrived at the top of the Beaver Slide, there was no sign of cattle going down. It's 2:00 pm, and will be dark in 3 hours. It will take at least 3 hours to ride through the canyon. What to do? We are exhausted, our horses are exhausted and we don't have enough horse feed to spend another night. We tied our pack horses to the trees and headed up country at a long trot. We headed to the rubber tire water tank and sure enough, there were tracks. They were looking for water. I'm sure once they ate their fill they really had a major case of cotton mouth. It would be hard to eat enough snow to soak up 20lbs of dry grass. We started tracking the yearlings, in about 3 minutes, it became obvious they were headed to Meserve Crossing for water. . We were dog trotting to catch up with them since we new

how black the canyon would be after dark. Their tracks had dived off the steep trail into Meserve Crossing. I was sure they would water, then wander on grade, into the park on the other side of Meserve. I knew if they were there, we were in for a real long night in a very black canyon. We were about 20 yards from the bottom when I noticed the tracks heading down, had tracks mixed in coming back up. Trent rode onto the bottom and the yearlings had gone directly to the river, watered and then turned and headed back up the trail we had just come down. Where had they gone to? We hadn't seen any cattle while coming down. We slowly worked our way back up the trail, reading the sign as we went. About a 1/3 of the way back up, it became obvious the yearlings had dived off into the nasty timbered canyon on our left. We were sure they were in there somewhere, but here was the problem. With a ride through the black canyon at night, how much time were we willing to spend looking for them. Would it be dark by the time we found them? We decided we had better go get our pack horses and head home. The thought of a hot meal, shower and warm bed made the decision easy. Even though we knew we had to ride back up the canyon in a day or two to look for them again, we also knew, we would have fresh horses to do it on.

We pushed the pace as best we could on our exhausted horses and were about half way down the canyon, when it became too dark to really see. The problem, now that darkness was upon us was, we hadn't gotten to any of the bad spots yet!!! Even though we had a full moon, the moon wasn't going to get high enough in the sky to put any light into the canyon until around midnight. It was dark around 5:30pm. Now those of who have ridden up or down the Kerns Joslyn trail and thought it was rather hairy, you ought to ride the Little Horn trail in the dark!! We had our headlamps on, but there wasn't any depth perception from that height on your horse. We could have walked I guess, but we were both just wanting to get home, plus we were each leading a pack horse. Sitting at that height you could see the rock your horse was about to step on, but couldn't tell if it was flat or at a 60 degree angle. It's amazing at how many times we each had an adrenalin rush in the dark, riding down a trail we have each ridden hundreds of times. We both said once we had reached the bottom, that we would never ride down it after dark again. It might actually have been better without our lights on. Ignorance is bliss!!!

Two days later, which was a Friday, we grabbed 3 fresh horses, fresh head lamp batteries, and Taylor, and headed back up the canyon before daylight to find the 3 yearlings. However, we timed it so we didn't get to any of the bad spots until after daylight. We arrived in the Parks around 9:30 am. When we got to Rock Cabin Park, Trent and Taylor headed up the Kerns Joslyn trail. They were going to tie their horses up at Sardine Lake and walk off afoot into Taylor Creek. Maybe they would find other cattle. I was going to go up country to where we had last seen the tracks of the 3 yearlings and start looking from there. When I arrived in the park just above Meserve Crossing, there were the 3 yearlings, standing there, grazing on the old feed. They looked 10,000% better than they had two days earlier. It's amazing what a little feed and water can do. Since I didn't want to trail cattle through the canyon in the dark, I grabbed the 3 and headed home with them.

Trent and Taylor caught up with me at the Rocky Bottom just at dark. It was a great day, even though they hadn't found any sign of more cattle.

The next day since we were still short 6 yearlings and the one pair, I decided to fly the mountain. I flew the mountain that afternoon. It was very calm and great flying. We

flew all of the country that I thought the cattle might be in and didn't see a thing. I decided that maybe the missing yearlings had walked down into the bottom of Bear Trap. We couldn't fly low enough to get a good look, in Bear Trap canyon. Two days later Trent and I grabbed 4 horses and packed back into Lake Creek. It is now November 15<sup>th</sup>.

Trent and I left early and headed to Bull Elk Park. It's about an 8 to 9 mile ride to Bull Elk Park. When we were about 2/3 of the way down to Bull Elk, I dropped Trent off and he walked off into Bear Trap Canyon to walk down it. We had dropped about a 1,000 feet in elevation so the snow was only mid shin to him in the timber. I took his horse and said I would tie his horse up on the edge of the timber, on the far end of Bull Elk Park. While Trent walked down Bear Trap Canyon he crossed 3 fresh sets of bear tracks and one mountain lion. One bear track had the smaller imprint of a cub in it so he chambered a round, just in case. I tied up his horse in Bull Elk Park and then headed east to a spring I new of, looking for any sign of cattle. I didn't expect Trent for several hours. When I arrived at the spring, there was no sign of anything, other than a few moose tracks. I headed on East of the spring through a timber patch of Lodge Pole pine that was littered with down fallen logs. I picked my way through and around the dead fall. I knew where there was a small south facing park about 1/2 mile east of the spring. Since it was south facing, it might have melted off and would have lots of grass. As I rode into the park, I had a rush of adrenalin, as sure enough there was manure. I'm sure to most of you, manure is not exactly exciting, but to a cowman looking for cattle, it's a great sign. It's real hard that time of year to gage just how old it might be. My guess is that it was about 3 weeks old. One of the reasons for my guess, was that under one tree there were 7 different piles. From the size of the piles I didn't believe it was yearlings, and the number under the tree, probably meant the cow had spent about 2 days waiting out a storm. We hadn't had a large enough storm to keep a cow under a tree for two days, in about 3 weeks. But where had she gone since then? Had she dropped off into the bottom of Lick Creek or off into the Dry Fork? I started making a big circle trying to cut some fresher sign but to no avail. It gets real steep going into either drainage and it was slick. In one spot the bare facing slope was frozen about an inch under the top of the ground. Six Moons feet went out from under, him and down we went. This threw me slightly forward and as he lunged to get to his feet, the saddle horn came up under my sternum. Once the immediate pain passed it really wasn't too bad. I'm sure I had torn some of the soft cartilage at the end of the sternum. I could feel it grating against the sternum when I pushed on it with my fingers. After cutting for sign for about an hour I headed back to the spring. As I rode along, I was contemplating where had that 4 legged leather chair gone to. If she had gone west (towards the Little Horn Canyon) on grade, she might have caught the Northern edges of Bull Elk Park in her travels. When I entered Bull Elk Park again, I rode the north edge. I got very excited again, as sure enough, there was cow sign. I followed the manure all the way to the North West corner of the park. There was cow sign everywhere in the timber. I started following a timbered ridge that runs north and west out of Bull Elk Park. There was sign all over the ridge. I was starting to wonder just how much manure can a dehydrated cow make on a daily basis? The ridge kept getting more narrow and timbered as I went. When I had traveled about 1/2 mile down the ridge, I came out on a little rock ledge and standing right below me, was the cow and calf we had seen on the first day of the Clean Up Ride in Lake Creek. We were about 10 miles from Lake Creek and about 1,500 feet lower in elevation. I gathered her

up and headed up country with her to where I had left Trent's horse. When I arrived at Trent's horse, I didn't see him at first. I did see his clothes hanging from the branches on the trees however. He had worked up such a sweat, that he knew he would chill if he didn't get his clothes dried out before we started riding out of there. It was a warm, bright sonny day of about 32 degrees. He looked like an albino Big Foot, standing amongst the green pine trees. I continued on with the cow as he got dressed. It took about 5 ½ hours to trail the cow to Lake Creek where I shut her in the corral for the night. We trailed her to the trailer the next morning and loaded her and came to the valley. She was one lucky cow.

The next day Trent had a commitment, so I headed back to the mountain by myself with my packhorse and two dogs. I just wanted to make one more swing into Bull Elk Park to check for any more sign of cattle. We had about 3 inches of new snow, so the tracking was very good. The wind had blown though, so our tracks to Bull Elk Park were completely filled with snow. So again, my horse had to break trail through knee deep snow to Bull Elk Park. The mountain is amazing as the snow at Lake Creek was knee deep on a horse and yet when you were at Rock Cabin Park, you were below the snow line. When I rerode Bull Elk Park, I didn't find any sign of additional cattle, so decided I would ride to Sardine the next day. As I was riding out of Bull Elk Park, I could tell that something was wrong with my horse. My gut feeling was that she was starting to colic. We had been packing in alfalfa cubes and I was sure she hadn't had enough water. Alfalfa cubes are great, but really not designed for our type of use. The problem is getting a horse to take in enough water, when they are in knee deep snow, it's cold out and the creeks are all ice covered. When I busted the ice off Lick Creek that morning, while crossing it, I couldn't get her to drink more than a swallow or two. Every time I would stop to glass the snow covered country she would start pawing and fidgeting like she was in pain. When you are faced with a situation like that you can't stop. If you stop and wait to see if it passes, and it doesn't, the winter conditions make walking back in a day impossible. To do it in a day, you will start sweating and then chilling, then hypothermia, then you die. I did have everything with me to spend the night if I had to, but that really isn't what I wanted. Alfalfa cubes do the same thing as dry rice. It goes in the gut dry, then expands and swells causing a blockage unless they have enough water to keep things moving. I rode into camp a little before dark and I could tell Tango was in a lot of discomfort. I had nothing at camp to give her to make her more comfortable. I knew by the time I rode out, then drove off the mountain to the vet, it would be midnight, and by then she would either be on the mend or too late to do anything for her. I kept going out to the barn every hour and checking on her just to make me feel better. She was covered in sweat and rolling in the snow and it's about 15 degrees out. About 10:00 pm it was obvious things were improving since she stopped sweating and rolling. I certainly slept much better knowing she was going to pull through.

Since it had taken so long to get to Sardine the last time, I left camp before daylight. It was bitter cold with about a 15 mph wind. My best guess, with the wind chill it was around zero. As I stepped out of the barn, I looked out just in time to see a ghost grey moose walk by. I have never seen one that color before. She was normal colors from the knees down, but the rest of her was the color of Hoot. I have seen the pictures going around on the internet of the Albino moose and she definitely wasn't an albino. Anyway that made my day. I'm so blessed to be able to witness things like that. I didn't

find anything in Sardine so pushed the pace back to the cabin as best one can do in knee deep snow. Saddled, loaded my pack horse and headed for the trailer 6 miles from camp. It was late afternoon by now. As I was riding out on the logging road, I had several people on snow machines all go by. I'm sure I looked more like John Wayne in "McClintock" as I was riding along with my pack horse and they were zooming by me on there new fangled machines. I just smiled and kept riding. It was easier riding out because the snow machines had packed the logging road.

Well, we are still short the 6 yearlings and will probably never recover them. I do believe with the early heavy snow, it pushed them into the bottom of the Dry Fork Canyon. To find them, you would have to walk off a foot, with the idea of staying down there for several days and just spending the night wherever you are when it's dark. It's very steep and lots of thick heavy timber. If you found them, then the question remains, how do you get them out of there? You won't walk them up out of there by yourself. It's probably 5-10,000 acres of timber. They might still show up, you never know. If they don't, some bear come spring time will be very thankful.

Well I'm going to wrap this up, so once more, want to thank everyone for all their hard work.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY AND BLESSED NEW YEAR!**

**The Double Rafter**