

RUMINANT DIGEST #22

It's been a long time since my last digest and I apologize for the delay but the cattle have been so busy ruminating that Trent and I haven't had time to get much accomplished other than the bare necessities of feeding every day.

DROUGHT:

Those that came on our last two trips last fall experienced one of the nicest weeks of weather we have ever experienced that time of year. On the Clean Up Ride (which is right around the 1st of October) we didn't even need to start the wood burning stoves in the cabin for heat. We did use them for cooking because the burning ban was still in place. All of this of course was due to the extreme drought that we were in. Well the drought made it an absolutely pleasant fall to work in outside. Well that all started changing in February. In early February the snow pack on the mountain was about 65% of normal. By the end of February the snowpack was 105% of normal. We had a tremendous amount of snow and wind. The snow piled up and it got harder and harder to get around. With 4 chains on we could get around to feed provided you didn't drive off of the areas you had been feeding on. This snow was of course packed solid. Outside those feeding areas the snow was above the axles on the pickup everywhere. After the heavy snowfall in February we didn't get much more in March, but March has been one of the coldest on record. Many days with the wind chill around 5 below to 10 above. Not exactly pleasant to be on a horse. The first week of April we finally had some nice spring weather and had a week in the 60's, once that week was over however, the temperatures plummeted and we have had a fair amount of snow with cold wind. Most of the days have seen highs in the low 30's with the wind chill being around 0. We are calving a few and this weather is causing some issues with frozen feet on one calf and a few chilled calves. Monday the 22nd of April the weather is calling for a high of 34, not exactly warm spring weather. Consequently, we don't have any grass yet and are having to purchase more hay than I wanted, but the cattle have to eat. Because of the drought hay is very high priced this year as I have spent over \$70,000.00 on additional hay. With the cold April, I am probably going to have to purchase another load of hay yet to get to green grass. We have enough hay to last until the 27th of April. The first warm day of growing weather appears to be the 26th. I hate to say it but it will take more than one warm day to grow grass. I would guess we need about 10 warm days. On the positive side though is that we have a great start for the grass ahead of us. Last year we didn't get any spring moisture until late May. The grass had a real hard time getting started last year. The damage was already done before we had moisture. However, we were lucky because some places didn't get any moisture at all. That certainly won't be an issue this year.

GOVERNMENT & PRIVATE BUSINESS:

Well each day there are new twists and surprises dealing with new government regulations. I thought I would take just a minute to explain a couple that effect me. Some of you who came last summer have heard about some of these.

STATE LIQUOR BOARD:

Yep, the state decided that I needed a liquor license to do what we do. I tried to explain to them that I wasn't selling beer, but was simply putting out a cooler at the end of the day and those that wanted, could help themselves. I was informed, "That constitutes a sale". I asked for an explanation and this is what I was told. Your guests are providing a service by coming and helping move the cattle. When I put out a cooler of beer this is paying them for that service with beer. Yes, you must be an elected official to understand this! I then asked him, If I go wrestle calves all day long at my neighbors branding and at the end of the day he puts out a cooler of beer, have we not traded a service for beer,

thus making a sale. His response was yes, that rancher would have to have a license to put out the beer. This also means if I go mow my neighbor's lawn because he had a heart attack and he gives me a beer when I am done, he would need a liquor license also. Taking this scenario in the state of Wyoming, if you take a beer for doing anything, someone better have a liquor license. I have of course taken this up with our local legislatures, but of course they are elected so they don't have a clue, or a desire to do anything about this. Now the next step in this process is that the cost of the license to sell beer, malt liquor or wine coolers is \$200.00 for me. Of course it then has to be advertised 4 times in the local paper, before the public hearing on it, before the license can be awarded. This of course means I get to pay for the 4 advertisements in the local paper. Since we are a small paper the cost is only \$57 per run time or a total of \$228.00 plus the cost of the \$200 license so I'm into it for \$428.00. My total beer purchases last year were about \$775.00 That means that a third of the total beer tab is actually taxes. **YOU MIGHT BE A CONSERVATIVE IF HAVING TO BUY A LIQUOR LICENSE TICKS YOU OFF WHEN YOU DON'T SELL BEER!**

Of course the next one that really ticks me of is with the Forest Service and their federal policies. Now you must remember, it's not the people I deal with that are setting the policies. Guess who it is again. It's the elected officials who are only concerned about getting reelected. Those who came on the trips in the summer of 2012 know we had a lot of sick calves and doctored calves all summer long until we finally treated the entire herd during the September Cattle Drive. I am just guessing, but I would be willing to bet that between, myself, Trent, Taylor and Wyatt we roped and doctored over 100 calves last summer. All of these sick calves have put me in hot water with the Forest Service. I'm sure at this point you can't see the connection. Let me explain. After roping and doctoring calves every time we rode I was very concerned about how many calves were saved and how many had actually died. Of course a dead calf doesn't pay any bills. We would doctor a calf and about half the time you wouldn't know if he lived or died because with all the country to ride you weren't certain if you were seeing the calf again or not. The one thing we knew, if you didn't get them doctored they were dead in 48 hours. As hard as it is to see all the cattle we figured the best time to vaccinate all the calves was when we trailed from the Lake Creek Pasture to the Lick Creek Pasture. We would be trailing right by the cow camp and by setting up a set of portable corrals with the existing corrals at the Lake Creek Cow Camp we could catch every calf. We were about 10 days away from the September trip and other than vaccinating the entire cow herd, we also had to get camp set up for the trip, plus get 30 head of horses shod. During this same time frame we had to go to Rock Cabin Park and set up the big mess tent there as well as get the water line running. Now remember, it was just Trent and I doing all this. The decision was easy, we would wait and vaccinate all the calves during the September Cattle Drive. We would have plenty of help gathering as well as helping to vaccinate the calves. Made perfect sense to me! To the Forest Service it doesn't work at all. Since we stayed a week longer in the Lake Creek Pasture we overgrazed it and didn't meet standards. **Federal Policy says you will move the cattle to the next pasture when you meet standards!** If I don't vaccinate the herd I could be looking at a 10% death loss. On 300 calves, that is not a small dollar figure. My decision was simple- we stayed a week longer and vaccinated the calves. Vaccinating the calves was a huge success from the efficiency standpoint of doing it that week, but also on the number of calves that were saved. We saw a huge decrease in the number of sick calves due to respiratory issues. Now, had we moved the calves and tried to gather them out of the Lick Creek Pasture I would be willing to bet we would have doctored 15% of the calves twice and missed 25% of the calves completely. The death loss would have been much much higher. However, I am in very hot water with the Forest Service over this. Not only did we stay in Lake Creek a week longer, but the cows **grazed while in the horse pasture**, resulting in us not meeting standards in the horse pasture. To meet federal policy I should have let the calves die I guess. It's funny how the Feds think if we all just follow policy we will all be holding hands singing Kumbayah! **YOU MIGHT BE A CONSERVATIVE IF IT BOTHERS**

YOU THAT FEDERAL POLICY DOESN'T CARE IF YOUR INVENTORY DIES! The other ironic thing is had I doctored the calves while in the Lick Creek pasture we would have had to set up a set of portable corrals somewhere in that pasture. Anywhere we set it up would have created a mark and stomped the grass down around the corral-leaving me in trouble with the Forest Service for damaging the resource. The only place to set up the corrals where they wouldn't leave a mark would have been right on the logging road itself. This of course would have had the public screaming like a mashed cat! It is beyond my comprehension how people can continue to vote in larger government!

HORSE STRING:

This will come as a shock to some, but horses get older and die just like us humans. I think everyone is aware of the ongoing battle dealing with horse slaughter. It's a very touchy subject as a horse is no longer just a working tool that people use to get to their jobs, or do their jobs. A hundred years ago the horse was a very important part of everyday life and allowed you to be successful and mobile to a certain degree. The tough part is, those of us who still use horses as a tool in our business are also extremely concerned about their well being. Those years of service are very deeply rooted in our beliefs of taking care of them. As a rancher who spends their entire life taking care of animals, the last thing you ever want is for that animal to suffer in any way shape or form. But reality is they get old also. As long as they have plenty to eat and are healthy, they are generally happy! So the question remains, "What do I do with the old horse that no longer has any teeth left"? This scenario gets tougher if the horse has become so stiff that they are dangerous to ride. Not every old horse can make a kids horse. Would you want to give the horse to some little kid knowing the horse is stiff and very well could fall on the kid? Here again, no easy answers. Most people do lose sight of the fact that while they try and turn a horse into a pet like a dog or cat, it just doesn't happen. People mistake the reaction they get from a horse when it sees them, that it is glad to see them because it missed them. The reaction is a trained response dealing with food for the horse. If you grain the horse every time you see it, the horse figures out pretty quickly when he sees you it is going to get fed.

Since we deal with this problem on a yearly basis, it is always a struggle to make the decision when it's time to get rid of a horse. We removed 11 horses from the herd this year. 9 of those hadn't been used for a couple years, but I still felt a sense of guilt in getting rid of them. The bright spot is that we were able to give 4 of them away to people who have little kids and weren't dangerous to ride yet. They just didn't have that essential item left (teeth) to be able to convert grass to enough energy to continue to do what we do without starving to death. Those 4 will be getting several pounds of grain daily and not having to do anything other than look excited when a human shows up to feed them. It's a perfect world for them in there few remaining years. Since horses get older we have purchased an additional dozen head of horses this year. We are busy putting miles on them learning their issues and correcting their bad habits. Most of the horse's bad habits are a result in them being the Alpha in their relationship with humans. If you ever make the statement I will buy a horse and we will learn together you just gave your horse the role of the ALPHA. A horse must do things you ask of it, out of trust for you. That trust can only come when the horse understands you are the ALPHA. Most horses have very limited life experiences and it is very true of those we have bought. Two of them are super nice horses and we turned them out of the corral about 4 days ago. They are terrified to go anywhere except stand around the corral and look at the hay feeder in the corral. The other horses have all come over and done the normal horse thing, but the new ones won't leave the corral area with them. I suspect other than when they have been ridden, they have never been out of a pen. They won't even go over when we give hay to the other horses. Hunger is a great motivator and at some point hunger will force them to walk the 300 yards over to where the other horses are eating. **You might be a conservative if you believe hunger is a great motivator to get a job!** A few of them will be ready for use this summer while a few will get lots of hard miles by the crew all summer long. There is nothing better for a horse from a

learning standpoint than wet saddle blankets! I would bet 90% of the new horses until they came here, have actually never been tired a day in their life. Being tired is something new to them but it is amazing how fast they learn when they get tired!!

CALVING STORY:

Somewhere about 1990 we were in the seed stock business and raising bulls to sell. We would sell 30-40 bulls annually. One way to sort of get a reputation, and your name out, was to enter bulls in various bull tests. You would enter 2-6 bulls in each of these different tests and at the end of the year each test would have a bull sale and only the top 2/3 of the bulls would get to sell. Maybe there would be 100 bulls from 25 different breeders all competing against one another. No one wanted to enter bulls that were marginal, so generally the quality was excellent, as most breeders would enter only their top end bulls. If you were in the top end your bulls generally sold well and you developed a reputation for having good cattle, thus creating a demand for your bulls.

We had been calving for about 70 days which meant we probably hadn't had a day off in at least 90 days and you were also getting up nights to check on cattle. It is an extremely exhausting period of time for those who don't have the luxury of lots of manpower. Unfortunately, we fall into that group short on manpower. My brother Blaine and I were both working all day, every day and then rotating the night calving every other night. This would allow you every other night, to at least get one full night's sleep.

Well we had a bull who had done very well at the bull test in Great Falls Mt. and the sale was coming up and of course I wanted to go up and see him sell and maybe buy a herd bull that we needed in the process. So the way I had it figured, I would make my last check of the night around 3:00am and if things were quiet I would hit the road to Great Falls after my check. If something was started I would call Blaine and he would come and take over. Since we were getting towards the end of calving we were only getting a calf or two each night so odds were I would check at 3:00am and be on the road by 3:15am. I was really excited and looking forward to getting off the ranch even if it was only for a day or two. I was all showered and clean when I made my check at 3:00am. As soon as I walked through the night calving pen, I knew Murphy had raised her ugly head and there was a change of plans, even though I hoped it was just a slight delay. When I had walked through the night lot at midnight things were real quiet. When I walked through again at 3:00am all things were quiet except for one cow. Now being it was a cow, this generally wouldn't have been a cause to delay my departure. Since a cow has been through this many times they generally will take care of themselves. Generally, I would have just put her in a stall in the barn and hit the road because Blaine would be there around 7:00am to take over. Every cow has their own personality and in every herd there are always a few cows who raise great big calves and seem real quiet, **except when they have a new calf!** At that time even the Man in the Moon isn't safe. They have a serious case of PMS (protective mother syndrome) and are generally avoided for your own safety. Well since Murphy had arrived it was of course one of those killer cows who was started. Now the weather was warm enough so that the calf was probably in no danger of chilling down, so with that scenario you would just leave ol Killer alone and let her calve. **STAY THE HELL AWAY FROM HER!** However, that was not to be the case. You see as I walked up the first thing I noticed was that the tips of the toes were pointed down. This meant the calf was coming backwards, instead of forward. Most cows will have a backwards calf by themselves, but they have to work at it pretty hard. Now the biggest problem with a backwards calf is that during the labor process the cow generally expels the calf about 2/3 of the way out then lays there and rests before the final push. On a calf coming head first that is fine and dandy, as the calf's head is out. On a backwards calf the head is still in the uterus, so his first gulp for air gets nothing but amniotic fluid and they drown. If I called Blaine and he came immediately since he lived 30 minutes from there it would take at least 40 minutes for him to dress and get here. In that amount of time, labor might cause her to try and have the calf before Blaine arrived,

ending up with a dead calf. The only solution was that I was going to have to put her into the head catch in the pulling room and pull the calf. Now the trick was going to be to get her first into the barn, and then into the head catch. In our night lot there were two rows of big old trees about 2 feet across, that ran the full length of the night lot and were about 15 feet apart. At some point in time, someone had planted them as a wind break for sure. Now since this cow was just starting labor, she was only upset with the world and not ready to kill anything yet! So the trick at this point is to be the aggressor and go right at her and make her yield. So I grabbed a 6 foot long tree branch, stuffed the flashlight between my teeth and charged her smacking her across the muzzle with the willow branch. If she turns and runs, you keep right after her not letting her get a chance to turn the tables on you. You want her to think the Tasmanian Devil is after her. I felt pretty secure in my plan because of the two rows of trees which gave me lots of obstacles to get behind if my bluff didn't work. I charged, I swung with a solid thwack, the cow turned and ran with me right after her, not letting her get a chance to stop. She ran to the end of the alley, into the A pen and right into the barn, with me slamming gates right behind her as we went. I knew I would have a terrible time getting her in the barn a second time if I wasn't successful on the first try. I kept her charging forward right through the open door into the pulling room, where she slammed into the self locking head catch. I let out a scream of delight because I had her! She is jumping up and down and side to side in the pulling chute. At the moment, labor, is the farthest thing from her mind. Of course this isn't my first rodeo. I get my pulling chains, hot water and soap, calf pullers and proceed with delivering the backwards calf. Cows are funny because they will completely forget about labor until you start to put some tension on the calf and then labor kicks back in and you go about delivering the calf. Once I had her cleaned up and the chains on the back legs, you hook the chains to the calf puller and give it a couple cranks, not much, just enough to trigger the contractions to start again. Once the contractions start you open up the pulling chute. The pulling room was a cinder block room about 14ftX14ft. Along one wall I had built my pulling chute. From the automatic head catch to the south wall you had about 2 feet, plenty of room for her head to stick out of the chute. The west wall was solid cinder block and the east side of the pulling chute is actually a big gate. Once the animal is caught and you are putting slight tension on the calf and the contractions have started, you open up the east side of the pulling chute wide open. This allows for lateral movement of the animal but if it is a tough pull they are going to lay down. By having them on their (preferably right side) this gives you ample room to assist in the delivery. Only experience teaches you how much pressure and when to apply it. The goal of course is a live calf and too much pressure to fast will kill it. By only cranking the puller a notch or two when they don't have a contraction will allow you to work with the cow. If she is standing when she has a contraction you pull down with the puller during the contraction. When she rests you rest also by bringing the calf puller back up so it is sticking straight out behind her. You have to give the muscles a chance to dilate so you don't want to be in a hurry. Once experienced you can tell whether to crank the puller a little tighter depending on how much progress you have made during the contraction. I am sure I have pulled over 1000 calves in my lifetime. Now since this calf was backward this created a whole new set of problems. The problem with a backwards calf is getting the hips through the pelvis and the top of the tail through the pelvis. A lot of times, the top of the tail head hangs up on the top of the pelvis. If you pull to fast or hard you will cripple the calf or kill him with a spinal injury. Of course the problem is that once the hips and tail head come through the vulva you are in danger of the umbilical cord either breaking coming through the pelvis or being pinched in the pelvis shutting off oxygen. Either way at this point you crank like hell because he is trying to breathe but his head is still in the uterus filled with amniotic fluid. More than once I have resuscitated a calf with mouth to nose resuscitation. You can tell as soon as the calf's head is out what you need to try and do to get them breathing on their own. The best thing to do is hang him by his heels to help things drain out of his lungs while trying to get him to breathe. Then you stick a piece of straw up a nostril. This generally

causes a reflex reaction of blowing out of their nose, which causes air to follow back in on the inhale. When this doesn't work I always do the mouth to nose resuscitation.

Now this cow had settled right down once I put some tension on the calf. With a little work with the pullers we had her laboring hard. She went down on her knees, then onto her side where I really wanted her. This gave me the best chance of a successful delivery. The calf was big and it was going to be a tough pull. I worked for some time and we were making progress so I knew we would get him pulled, but I still had no idea if he would be alive or not. Finally, the tail head came through and I cranked as hard and fast as I could. Once the calf cleared momma, he slid out on the floor a couple feet. I grabbed a piece of straw and shoved it up the calf's nose. He snorted and took in a breath but then stopped, so I shoved the straw up his nose again. The same result a second time, a big breath then nothing, the third time he took more than one breath so I felt things looked pretty good. I was bent over working with the calf, when I heard a loud pop from behind me. I still to this day do not know what happened, but somehow the automatic head catch had automatically come open. Now if you remember, when I first started to bring her to the barn that she was just in the upset stage and not in the killer stage. Well she was way beyond killer stage now, and was in the Hunt you down and Kill You Stage. The only thing that saved me was there was just a slight hint of partial paralysis as she jumped up to her feet. She wobbled to the left before she charged. That wobble gave me just enough time to jump behind the gate that was the east side of the chute. With the gate swung wide open it was against the South wall. With the location of the head catch and the gate open I was trapped in a pie shaped area 2 ft deep on one end, sloping down the 8 ft to the end of the gate which was against the wall. I was safe behind the gate but it was solid cinder block wall behind me. This cow with her head in the air was charging back and forth from one end of the 8ft gate to the other, looking for some way to get in there and educate me. She was looking high and low for any opportunity. I hoped she wouldn't decide to see if she could jump it and come down on top of me. Now remember this all started at 3:00am. It was probably around 3:45 at this point in time. I remember thinking there is a chance no one will come discover me until around 7:00am. I of course was being as quiet and small as I could possibly be. She certainly didn't need any encouragement. By now the calf was flopping around trying to get on his feet. Of course the floor was slick with amniotic fluid and he couldn't get up. He would try and get up and she would spin around and bellow at him then turn and charge back to the gate. This is all taking place in a very small area and I'm having a hard time seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. As this process continued, I started to notice a pattern. She would charge me at the gate, bellow, throwing snot and saliva all over the place, then spin to her right and spin on around to her right until she came to the calf, stop, bellow at him then pivot and charge me behind the gate again. Now there are two doors into the pulling room. One on the west,(the one I brought her through) and one on the east. Both were shut tight so she couldn't find a way out of there. It was like being trapped in the bottom of a well with an alligator and all you have between you and the gator is a 5 gallon bucket. Now there is a rope hanging down from the top of the well but in order to reach it, you are going to have to step up on the bucket and of course at that point there is nothing between you and the alligator. After about 15 minutes of this, I was growing tired of this little game but she didn't appear to be tired of it at all. Knowing that cows and horses both have blind spots directly behind them I decided my best chance was to wait until she charged me, then when she pivots to the right I will step into her blind spot and follow it around until I was close to the west door then dart out the door. I observed her charging technique a few more times to make sure she would do it the same way every time, took a quick gulp and stepped out from behind the gate into her blind spot as she pivoted by me. It worked just like I hoped it would. I followed her on around and darted through the door slamming it behind me as I jumped up onto the next stall and into it before looking back to see if she was in hot pursuit. I gave a big whoop as I realized I was in the stall by myself and she was still in the pulling room. The rest was pretty simple. I opened up a stall that I wanted her in and from the outside opened the pulling room door. She charged out the opened

door, down the alley, right into the stall I had opened for her. I slammed the gate on her, then went back and got the calf and slid it in under the gate with her. Shut the lights out, went to my pickup and headed to Great Falls. Just another night in the calving barn! **You might be a conservative if you figure out on your own, how to deal with a crisis!**

GUARDIANS OF THE RANGE FUND RAISER 2013:

HELPING TO KEEP PUBLIC LANDS PUBLIC!

The Guardians of the Range are having our 3rd annual fund raiser to help keep the doors open in this fight for private property rights. While the Guardians only deal with grazing and grazing related issues, the bottom line is we must keep public land public. The Government loves to pit one user group against the next in their battle to completely take over every aspect of our lives. We must stand together and support one another.

We are having our 3rd annual fund raiser this year at Eaton's Ranch June 1st. Eaton's is the oldest Dude Ranch in the United States. We would love to have anyone who would like to join us. We are starting with a ranch tour this year starting at the Double Rafter at noon. Dad will spend about an hour entertaining people with stories of the Double Rafter. From there we will head to the Sawyer battle where dad will again tell the historical highlights of this unique battle. From there we will go to the Padlock Ranch and spend a couple hours there. From there we will go over to Eaton's where we will have Happy Hour, dinner, the auction and speaker.

We will not be using proxy-bid this year. All of the auction items will be listed on the Guardians of the Range web site. www.guardiansoftherange.org Again we have many great items to auction off. I am of course donating 2 spots on any trip with availability in 2014 or against a balance you might have on a 2013 trip. We have several hunts again this year so tune into the Guardians web site to view the individual items. Like in years past you can phone in to bid or have us call you. Actually the best way to do this would be to contact me at 1-800-704-9268 or 307-655-9539 and I will get someone to call you as the item you are interested in comes up for auction. Since it is not on proxibid you will not be able to follow along like in years past. Dana Cell-307-655-9539, Alice Cell 307-752-4769, Trent Cell-307-752-4770, Taylor Cell 307-753-1935

Two years ago the cattle drive item brought what it was worth. Last year the two spots sold for \$1900.00 total, a heck of a buy, so you just never know. My best guess is that the auction would start around 7:00pm MST.

One other thing we are doing this year different than last year is selling sponsorships for the auction. You will get recognition on the Guardians Web site. We are selling them at \$250, \$500, 1,000 and \$1,500 so if anyone would like, we would love to have your help. I am not going to say it will increase your sales, but I will say it will help spread the name of the Guardians on a larger scale. I will be sending out the latest version of auction items sometime in late May to keep you updated. We had 10 inches of snow April 23rd and school was cancelled for the day. Looking forward to the summer and seeing some of you again.

Cow Boss

TIDBITS:

Since the late 70's beef consumption per capita has dropped from 75 lbs per person per year to around 55 lbs per person per year. During that same time frame, sugar consumption has gone from 75 lbs per person per year to 150 lbs per person per year.

Around the turn of the century the life expectancy of a male was 47 years. At that point in time the populace was on a 100% organic diet. Today thanks to technology it is 80 years. Technology has allowed agriculture production to increase dramatically. If we went back to farming the way we did in 1950 we could not feed our current population let alone other parts of the world like we currently do.