

DOUBLE RAFTER NEWS #14 4/08

THE RUMINANT DIGEST

SPRING TIME AT THE FOOT OF THE BIG HORNS:

As all of you know we have been in a drought for most of the last 10 years. Most of our trips you didn't even have to carry your slicker with you on a daily basis. Well that has changed. You better take your slicker this year even if you are only going to the outhouse. The month of April had 8 days of normal or above normal temperatures. The other 22 days were below normal temperature. We had fresh snow on the ground at the house on May 10th with lots of mud. Due to the cold temperatures the grass has been really slow coming this year. The high country on the mountain still has lots of snow. The snow pack at Little Baldy along the highway (5 miles due south of the Lake Creek cow camp) is 305% of normal. This of course is going to complicate things somewhat for us on the June trip. We probably won't know our exact plan until about the 20th of June. But then these trips have always been about reality. (None of us would probably make it as Hollywood actors or politicians). I saw pictures in a museum recently, taken in the late 1800's of a string of mules in Idaho, that were used to deliver the mail through the mountains in the winter. They had snowshoes on. Now the snowshoes were slightly different than what man wears but they were still snowshoes. Anyway, I don't anticipate snowshoes, but be sure to bring wet weather gear.

FOREST SERVICE: I took some pictures into the forest service in March showing the impact from non-grazing sources. I have been saying for years that there is an impact from the recreationist and it needs to be recognized instead of always blaming it on the grazer. The head range con was very glad to get the pictures and wanted to put them in the file and show them to the recreation people. Using the measuring method that is now used by the forest service you measure the amount of forage standing up against a pole. There are 1/2 inch increments up the pole starting at the ground. After 480 measurements your average has to be above the 5th band. Now if you take measurements in an ungrazed area, then trail a herd of cattle through that same area and go back and then remeasure, you will find significantly different measurements. The same amount of forage is still there, but it has been knocked down. Therefore you won't make the target average which tells the environmentalist that you must have already over grazed it. Consequently you could lose your grazing rights! We now measure before we turn into a pasture, and then during grazing, to tell us when to leave. Then after grazing, we measure once again to know how much we left. We have a situation in Lake Creek where the campers love to camp. The measurements were 2 inches shorter than another area in the pasture before cattle were turned into the pasture. Both areas are similar in elevation, easy for cattle to get to, water and so forth and about 1/4 mile from each other.

Getting back to my story~ ~ The FS asked me if I would take one of their maps home and mark the areas of where each of my pictures were taken, with a corresponding number on both the map and pictures. I said I would be glad to. When I got home I started looking at the map. As I was entering the data I noticed a blue line that appeared

to be a boundary line between us and one of the Sheep allotments to the south. It was very obvious to me that the boundary had been moved at least ½ mile north on this map. I took the pictures and map back to the FS and asked them why the boundary line had been moved. I asked if the sheep man had been complaining that cattle were drifting onto their allotment. I was told no they hadn't heard any complaints from the sheep man. However they thought the boundary was about where it was supposed to be. I then produced two letters written in 1982, about a discussion on the boundary that took place onsite with the FS, with the cowman and the sheep man all there. While the sheep man and the cowman differed on where the boundary was, it was only about an area 60 yards wide that they disagreed on. Certainly not enough for either party to be concerned with. The FS stumbled around and said they would have to pull the notes from the meeting, when they moved the boundary, to determine why they had moved it. The amazing thing is that this was all done without so much as notifying either the sheep man or the cowman. It has been decided that we will have a discussion on this in May when we meet to set this year's pasture rotation.

RANCH NEWS:

I walked down to the old barn last week to shut a gate because we had 5 semi-loads of yearlings coming in later that afternoon. I was anticipating them coming off the truck wild eyed and running. Since I was walking, all three dogs fell in behind me as we strolled down to shut a gate, knowing that it was probably the last easy stroll until sometime in November. As I walked by the old barn I spotted a striped cat (for you city folks that's a skunk) out looking for something to eat. I turned and told the dogs to sit and stay. Now Maverik and Murphy both dropped and stayed, but the hunting instincts in Boone took over. He charged the striped cat. It was about 20 yds to the skunk and Boone covered it in about 4 strides, grabbed the skunk by the back of the neck, shook him good and hard and flung him in the air. That was about the time the skunk decided he had had enough of Boone's jocularities. As the delightful smelling dog decided he had made a giant oops, he came back to me running as hard as he could go. Amazingly the skunk had not managed a direct hit on Boone. So even though he was rather noticeable, you could keep your dinner down, as long as you were upwind. I walked back to the barn to get my horse, trying to stay upwind of Taylor's dog. I had a pretty strong hunch that Boone was sleeping in the garage that night instead of with Taylor. Trent and I swung up on our horses and headed out to meet the five semi's that had yearlings in them. With the mud, we were going to have to trail the yearlings on home. The whole trick when they come off the truck is to let them run~ ~just make sure it is in the direction that you want. As we were unloading the trucks with the yearlings, you could always tell where Boone was, without even looking. The five truckers were all commenting about the lovely spring smelling day. We had about 4 of the semi's unloaded when Taylor came driving by on his way home from track practice. He rolled his window down as he went by and asked if there was anything he could do to help. Trent said "Take your dog with you. These yearlings don't need anything more to get excited about". Taylor not knowing any different, stops, opens up his door and hollers for Boone. Boone comes running and jumps into Taylor's lap and then into the back seat. Taylor shuts the door and this is about the time things got funny. Two seconds later, Taylor throws open the back door shouting "Boone get out"!! "Boone get out"!! Of

course Trent and I and the five truckers are just roaring with laughter. Boone just sits there and looks at him like, you just told me to get in. Of course we are all rolling with laughter. Just a hunch, but I suspect there will be another story someday on a payback!

After getting the fifth truck unloaded Trent and I started back up the road behind the yearlings and Trent commented. "I'll bet if Ice bucks he will buck fast and hard". Thirty seconds later Ice grabs himself and blows going into a spin at the same time. I came down after the first jump off center because of the spin and well the rest is dirt. I came down on the county road on my butt and rolled onto my stomach from the momentum. I had managed to hang onto one rein and Ice started backing away from me dragging me up the road on my belly. I was sure glad he stopped after about 15-20 feet because my shorts couldn't hold anymore gravel. Needless to say once we got back with the yearlings, Ice and I went for another circle. I wish I could say that he is through bucking me off, but I'm not sure he is.

Branding:

Since we are having a very late spring Trent and I decided that if we branded a little bunch of yearlings each afternoon, that maybe in the long run, it would be easier than the way we have done it in the past. In the past we would set aside two days and work from daylight to dark to get the branding done. Attitudes always needed adjusting during these days so we thought maybe a slower pace with just the two of us would work. We had to brand, tag, pour and implant the heifers. Because we had spayed these heifer and taken their ovaries out we now had to implant them with artificial hormones that replace what we removed when spaying. If the heifers are not implanted then their gains are less and we get paid on the gain. Spaying these heifers accomplishes two things, first it allows them to go to any state in the nation with just a visual health check. If the heifers are not spayed then some states will make you catch each one and draw blood and send it to a lab. Of course this means each animal must have its own numbered ear tag, be restrained in a chute to draw the blood within 2 weeks of the delivery time and then you get to pay the lab to do the work, not to mention the stress factor of going through the chute again. The other reason for spaying is the obvious one and that is they can't become pregnant. You hope since they are spayed the feedlots will give you a little more because they aren't pregnant. Anyway, we are putting the estrogen back in that we took out originally. (Boy does that sound like a government program) As we started the branding procedure Trent caught the first animal in the chute and as I started to implant the heifer she threw her head up and hit my hand that was holding the implanting gun. The implanting gun has a needle on the end of it about 2 inches long and about half as big around as a pencil. With her head exhibiting ample force, she managed to have me shove the implanting needle into my other hand. It went in on top of my hand between my thumb and index finger. I really can't tell you how far it went in because I didn't leave it there long enough to measure it. There was ample blood to assure me that my heart was still beating so there for there really wasn't anything to be worried about. Anyway, I have now had my estrogen. Don't anyone be too alarmed if I start getting concerned about whether my shirt matches my saddle or what color of shirt should I wear to match my mood today. I guess on the bright side, the implant is only good for 90 days so it should be worn off about the same time that I get my fall wardrobe out!

Guardians of the Range:

Our grass roots organization continues to deal with Forest Service and BLM issues such as the one the first article was about. We are getting a reputation as a very fair straight forward group to deal with. We even had one forest employee recommend to a permittee that they should join our group. I have been elected the chairman for the year so I have one other item on my plate that I'm not sure how I'm going to fit in. We deal with the local Forest Service and BLM but the real battle is the policies that have been implemented by Clinton Administration and Bruce Babbitt. I was sure with Bush in office we would see a reversal of some of these policies but like most of the domestic issues Bush has really done nothing. Of course this means our battles are really with the legal terrorists called environmentalists. The battles will not be fought at the local level but at the federal level and we all know how difficult this will be. These people are better funded and better organized. Hell, ranchers just want to be left alone to do what they love, work with the land and their livestock. This battle will not be cheap so the Guardians have started an endowment fund to help us fund ourselves in this upcoming battle. We don't get one penny of any tax money but do have a 501 c 3 so that we can take donations for this cause. This battle is about trying to preserve the Spirit of the West that is still present in these small agricultural communities. That same spirit is what settled this great country. I feel so very fortunate to be part of this effort to preserve our way of life. To those past guests who have joined the Guardians, I can't say thanks enough. We have had one past guest step up to the plate and make a very very generous gift to our endowment. I don't know if I can ever express how her gift has so humbled me.

Those people who are coming this year and have noticed a new charge called the Guardians Range Fee of \$20 dollars are all contributing to the effort. Those 20 dollars are passed directly to the Guardians of the Range. If you have started receiving our news letter and weren't really sure as to why, that is the reason. The biggest single reason that we will go out of business is due to policy that is enacted to garner votes with very little concern to the true impact. Anyway, anyone that wants to help we would love your support. Do you realize that from 1980 to 2001 there were a **half million acres per year** converted from agriculture to urban sprawl? It's amazing but the enviro's are creating the very thing that they think they are preserving. I'm sure that figure has climbed since 2001. Without our federal grazing permit my place goes on the market just as soon as I can get to the phone and call the realtor. I'm not foolish enough to think I can make it without the cattle drives.

MURPHY:

Well Murphy went and did it again. As a pup she spent about 3 months healing a broken leg with splints, surgeries and so forth. I sent her after a yearling about 3 weeks ago and she managed to break the same leg again. It's the same bone as last time but in a different place. The vet feels it's just a fluke but none the less she is probably not going to be any help until late July. We will have the pins taken out in another two weeks. Then confinement for another week after that, then minimal movement for a couple of weeks. It would be easier to keep a tornado under wraps than her from moving.

CHANGES: We are continually making changes in the Cattle Drives to try and make them more efficient and better for you. We have ordered a new cook tent which we will pitch on the mountain in July and leave it up until after the Sept trip. We will pitch the two cook tents that we currently use in the valley before the Sept trip to try and make the Sept trip a little easier on myself and Craig Mead. We have purchased two porta potties and mounted them on a trailer where they can be moved to where they are needed. This frees up a couple of tepee tents and we can now drive off with someone shut in the outhouse which we have now named the Crapper Trap. We now have showers for use during the Cowboy Camp weeks. (I wonder what someone might be willing to pay to use one)?

We are also going to be marketing several different items with the Double Rafter Logo on them. Some of the items, on the things to bring list, are difficult to find in some areas. We will be happy to see that you have the correct one for the particular trip that you are going to be on. For a list of some of these items go to the web site. Some items we are in the process of having made. We won't have all items on hand. However we will stock the items on the things to bring list. Certain items like the belt buckles take a minimum of 6 weeks to have made. We have ordered a few extras to have on hand this year.

Business is booming!!!

This summer is going to be the busiest summer we have ever had and that's a good thing. We look forward to getting to share our lives with our past friends and the new ones that we will make. Our summer life at 9000 feet is generally something people only imagine. We are so blessed to be able to spend the hours on a back of a horse commuting to where the work is instead of in a car. I truly feel sorry for those of you who have to deal with the traffic every day. When you are riding along viewing God's creation you can't help but feel truly blessed. I guess that is one of the reasons that the business is booming, as other people wish to experience the inner satisfaction that one gets, when riding along and working the livestock. There is a serenity to it that just can't be equaled. This brings me to another point. Next years bookings (09) are way ahead of where this year's bookings were a year ago. I'm not trying to push anyone but availability is going to be somewhat limited next year, as June and Sept are both 70% full. Since we are offering the Cowboy Camps we will be able to accommodate more bookings. We will evaluate this years Cowboy Camps and make some changes that I am sure will improve next year's trips. One feature we will probably add next year will be a trip through the canyon on the Cowboy Camps. Anyway this is just an update for any of you that are interested. I'm guessing this will be the last edition of the Ruminant Digest until sometime in the fall. I will have the trip reports put up of course. We haven't set the June 09 dates as I'm waiting for word from the Forest Service as to my turn on date for next year. They will be similar to this years dates though. Since we all know how fast government works it could be a couple of months before I will have the exact dates for June and July. September 09 is set with arrival for the 5th. Take care and I would love to hear from you. I no longer have the email address of dkerns@fiberpipe.net. Use either the dana@doublerafter.com or dkerns@wbaccess.net **GOD BLESS!**

Dana