

## JULY 2012 CATTLE DRIVE TRIP REPORT

### **July 1<sup>st</sup>:**

We picked people up in Sheridan and headed to the ranch. The heat that was accompanying the drought made for a very apprehensive week. Cattle and heat just don't mix well. With the temperature over 100 degrees I knew it would make for some discomfort with the guests, the cattle, the horses, dogs and cowboys. One of the other problems we would be encountering was the fact that we were calving, so we knew we would be dropping new mommas and their babies as we went. With the extreme heat dehydration in little baby calves can be a real concern. We had several new babies that we had to put fluids in just a couple days earlier. I hoped I didn't have to make a choice between giving a calf fluids or giving a guest fluids, it could be a tossup!

We did the morning horsemanship clinic and it looked very encouraging, so we were ready to head out that afternoon with the first group of cattle. After lunch we gathered the pasture just east of the house and started the trek with about 100 pair to the next pasture where we would gather them the next morning and continue our journey to our summer grass. Once we had the herd gathered we had to cut back, 8 brand new calves and their moms. A day old calf just can't walk 3 or 4 miles, especially in the heat we were experiencing. We knew it was extremely hot when one of our guests started exhibiting signs of heat exhaustion. It's real tough on them when you figure the climate changes and elevation changes they have made in the last 24 hours. You generally don't eat, sleep or hydrate as well as you should when you travel. Then step out and do something in extreme heat that you aren't used to doing and you have the perfect recipe for heat exhaustion. Fortunately this guest was in very good physical condition and we caught it plenty early enough so that it wasn't anything to serious. We stopped with her under the shade of a tree next to the creek to keep her cool. We soaked a cloth in the creek and put it around her neck and one of the wranglers rode back to the house and got the car and came and got her. Other than she felt terrible about it, there was no harm done and she completed the rest of the week just fine. After we got the cattle to the destination for the day we ran into Garry and Rob Lawrenz who had been attending a wedding and so they had arrived late. Since they are many times repeat guests we had tied their horses at the barn and told them join us when it worked. They at least got to ride the last 20 minutes back to the ranch with the group.

### **July 2<sup>nd</sup>:**

With the extreme heat we knew we needed to be moving early this morning. Cattle in the heat move like molasses on a cold day, really really slow! We caught the horses in the dark and had breakfast around 4:30 am. When you can feel the heat that early in the morning, you know you are in for a long day. We rode over to gather the herd and had several new calves in the night. They are pretty easy to drop behind as they are still doing the funky chicken when they try and stand. We got a little slower start than I wanted as the cowboys in the lead didn't make sure and throw the cattle above the slide area and we ended up with cattle in the middle of it. Once we got to the top of the hill we sat and let cattle mother up which is absolutely crucial to any success. Cow and calves basically have a built in GPS and will go back to where they last nursed. So it's really important to stop periodically and let them mother up. Around 11:00am it started to get really hot. We stopped at the top of the Red Hill to let cattle mother up and by stopping at the top of the hill you are hoping to catch any small breezes. However the cattle started jamming and milling and pushed a bunch through the fence into the neighbors bull pasture. This of course does not improve relations with your neighbor. We turned the herd loose and headed downhill for the last 3 miles to camp. With the heat it was very slow going. As

we approached the last mile I noticed several cows that were getting ready to have their calves. I didn't really want this to happen but when the contractions start, there isn't much you can do to stop it other than hope we could make it to the pasture in time. If we don't get there in time you then have a brand new baby and mother along the road to take care of later. We just made it to the pasture, 4 hours later, and the three cows who had started, laid down and had their babies within 20 minutes of arrival. All is well that ends well, I guess! We had a couple good nominations for the White Bags this evening though. Von Brady had felt a migraine coming on as we were riding along and it made her nauseous. She leaned over the side of her horse and lost her morning breakfast. However, she didn't lean over far enough and some of it her horse wore for the rest of the day. The other nomination was Jennifer who started directing cattle like a traffic cop. You must remember, none of our cows have been to the big city so it meant absolutely nothing to them. However, the group consensus was that Jennifer should carry the White Bags the next day.

That evening as we are sitting around camp we could see a major black storm building in the west. As so often happens when we are camped there, the wind that came roaring through prior to the storm, was major wind and blew several tepee tents over and even the lids off a couple of coolers. Once the storm went through the sky turned blue again and we had a very pleasant evening.

### **July 3<sup>rd</sup>:**

We had a short day planned as far as the distance to travel with the herd. We only had to travel about 4 miles with the herd today to the destination. We would drop the cattle there, come back to camp, spend the night and hit them early the next day for a real tough push. I was sure we were going to be back early enough that day that I had arranged for a bus to come pick people up around 1:00pm and take them to Custer Battlefield for the afternoon. It is a fascinating Indian battle that is only about an hour's drive away. Since this is reality, nothing of course went as planned. We had a small package of young pairs who were about 10 days old and I figured they were old enough to walk the 4 miles today. Really from the time we got on our horses that morning, nothing went right. We rode out to gather the young pairs and right away I noticed a couple sick calves who were very dehydrated. I turned around and loped back to camp leaving everyone else to continue gathering. My electrolytes were all in the pickup and the pickup was headed to the top of the mountain to pack the first load of groceries into the next camp. I needed to get to camp before Trent and Jake left for the mountain. I did get there in time and grabbed a couple bags of powdered electrolytes. At the same time the herd was coming close to the corral and the leads swung up high which was perfect. There is a real big bog that has to be crossed and little baby calves don't like to cross bogs. You generally end up grabbing a few of them by hand and throwing them out in the bog, hoping then that they go on across. Then my worst fear happened. I wasn't able to be with the gather so couldn't direct people as to what needed to be done. Little calves generally don't walk as fast as their mothers, so by the time we got to the bog most of the calves are in the back. This would have been fine as long as all the cattle swung high to go in above the bog. But that is not what happened. Most of the cows went high then turned and walked down the hill towards the corral. The calves didn't stay high but turned and walked parallel to mom except they were on the opposite side of the bog. This bog is about 20 feet across. When the calves got to the bottom the cows turned and started into the corrals. This left all the calves on the opposite side of the bog, who then decide that mom must be back on the other end of the pasture where we had started gathering from this morning. About 25 calves turned and bolted in the opposite direction. I could do nothing but sit and watch the whole thing. People were chasing calves every which direction which was the wrong thing to do to start with. When you chase a calf they only run harder. About the only time you chase a calf is when you are going to rope him. Most of my crew is young and don't have any experience dealing with little baby calves because they are in school when most people are calving, so they don't have any idea exactly what to do. Trent who knows what to do was headed up the mountain with the rest of the

weeks groceries and I was on the wrong side of the bog to be able to give orders. With the bawling of the cows no one could hear anything I was saying. Once I got across the bog I was able to start directing people and we shortly had things back under control and the herd corralled. We were already 2 hours behind schedule for the morning and hadn't even gotten out of the pasture yet. However, the late start set the tone for the rest of the day. We corralled the 3 sick calves with their mothers because they were going to need more than one treatment of fluids, especially in this heat. We threw the two herds together and headed up the canyon. We managed to get everything across the bridge on the river. We sat and were hoping the cattle would pair up but with the increasing heat cattle didn't seem to be interested in doing anything other than hunting shade. I decided to make a push for the canyon, hoping that some of the cattle would find their calves. The hope was that once we got into the canyon, it would be a little cooler with the rims sticking up and the sun not completely overhead yet. It took close to an hour to make the first mile. We finally managed to get through the state line and almost too where we were going to sit for a while and let things mother up when everything went to hell! Calves started running back, cows started running back and we were only a mile from camp. The toughest things in these types of conditions is that the guests have no experience in what to do and you don't have time to ride up to them and communicate what is taking place or what needs to be done to stop it. If I took the time to communicate this, we would be starting over in the morning at the exact same place we started from today. I knew our only chance was to retreat and regroup. It was a little bit like Custer's massacre and the cattle were the Indians and we were the soldiers. Everywhere you looked there were cattle. Back behind us we had come through the state line fence. It was built brand new about 4 years earlier and was still in pretty good shape. I knew our only chance was to beat the calves to the state line and hope we could stop them there. I had to hope that when people saw me spurring my horse back down country, that they would pick up on what I was planning and come join me. By myself I knew there was no way I would do more than slow them down temporarily. As I was flying down the road passing calves with sparks flying off the metal shoes as they clanged down on the rocks I glanced behind me to see my daughter-in-law in hot pursuit. She had decided to cowboy that day instead of staying in camp and cooking. Poor decision. Behind her I could see a couple guests turning their horses around and coming with the flood of cows and calves. I beat the calves to the gate in the state line, slid my horse to a sliding stop and spun him around facing the charging herd. I started waving my arms and yelling as Ali pulled up beside me. I shouted we wanted to just stop the calves and sit and hold them until things quieted down. Otherwise it was a do over the next morning. About that time 3 or 4 more guests came charging up. I quickly outlined the plan. With 3 cowboys sitting in the gate and two more of us on the outside edges to keep turning the herd into the middle we managed to stop the onslaught of cows and calves. Of course the people in the lead had no idea what had happened as they were sitting and waiting for us to show up. Here again, there was no way to communicate with them. After about 10 minutes of just sitting there cattle stopped coming down the canyon to join us. We decided to sit another 10 minutes to let things settle before trying to take the herd back up the canyon to join the other cattle. I glanced at my watch and realized it was past 11 and we were supposed to have a bus at camp in about an hour to pick up guest and take them to the battlefield. Hell, they were experiencing a battlefield. I pulled out my SAT phone, called dad and told him to cancel as there was no way we were going to be back in the noon hour.

After a short sit we started our bunch back up the canyon. We caught the other herd about ½ mile ahead of us. It was hot by then and cattle had very little interest in doing anything other than standing under a shade tree. We sat a while and then took off up the canyon to the next designated stop. It was a push every step of the way. The calves wanted to go back down country and the cows didn't want to go anywhere. By the time we got to where we leave the road and hit the single file trail many of the guest were off afoot chasing calves through the timber, around the boulders, and over the slab rocks. Garry Larwenz was riding Gunner and Gunner was really enjoying it. I don't think Garry had

been in the saddle for more than 10 minutes all day. As we crossed the single file bridge I fell into the leads to keep them walking. We only had a ¼ mile to go for the day. I pushed my group up through the trees and kept doubling back and picking up smaller groups of cattle with riders pushing onward and upward. Everyone was absolutely doing fantastic and the challenge was tough. I rode back down a ways and looked for the drags and could see Garry and Taylor both off afoot on the other side of the river chasing a couple calves. I loped on back and helped them get them bunched and across the bridge. We kept pushing up the trail to the top. Garry and Taylor both looked spent, but still game. I noticed Garry had a big green splotch of grass stains across the back of his shirt. When I asked him about it he just grinned. It was obvious it was a Paul Harvey "The Rest of the Story". As we reached the top with the last 30-40 head there is a cliff on one side of you. The cattle still weren't walking but pushing and shoving. One cow pushed and caused a ripple effect and a calf on the edge got his back feet shoved off over the edge. With the calf teetering on the edge Taylor dived for him and grabbed him by the ears. He was then able to pull the calf up over the edge and back onto the trail. Another 20 yards and we had the cattle through the gate where we could drop them for the day. It was now 4:30 in the afternoon and extremely hot. We had started shortly after daybreak and it had taken all day to go the 4 miles. I wasn't about to let the cattle whip us know. I sent everyone else back to camp and I sat and held herd until the cattle got paired up. I knew it would be a while because most of them just laid down because they were exhausted also. I sat there for about 2 ½ hours until it started to cool off, then cows started showing up looking for their babies. Once I had everything paired up I was able to ride back to camp for a cold drink of anything that was cold and wet. I had run out of water several hours ago.

\*\*\*SIDE NOTE

Right where Taylor grabbed the calf by the ears is where we got a cow pushed over a week later. The cow paralyzed herself in the back end in the fall and had to be shot. I talked about this incident in my last Ruminant Digest.

#### **July 4<sup>th</sup>:**

Well the positive thing about this day was the fact that where we had dropped the cattle the day before was on our allotment so if we didn't have good luck today moving the herd we were at least in a place we could leave them until the following week.

Today though is a big day as we have to break down camp and move it to the next destination. This always creates a problem logistically. We had every ones beds, clothes, tents and fresh horses that had to also be moved to the next camp. Like all trips things that are unexpected happen all the time. We discovered just before we had camp all packed up that we had lost first gear in the transmission on the grocery truck. It had the deep freezes in it and while we didn't need it the rest of the week we did need to get the deep freezes and refrigerators plugged back in. We did manage to catch 2<sup>nd</sup> gear and was able to drive it back to get things plugged in. We also discovered that we had lost reverse also. Now when you lose reverse there is a little more planning that needs to go into your route in order to keep yourself out of a corner. But then what is life without some excitement. Jake took my pickup and the fresh horses with him as well as a lot of camp gear that had to be hauled into the next camp. What could possibly go wrong? We had a herd of cattle that we had recently bought who had never been on the mountain, so they had no idea or desire to go there. We had the transmission out of the catering truck, or I guess only 1<sup>st</sup> and reverse. Hey we still had 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> and overdrive, so we were in good shape there. We had a 19 year old kid pulling a 24 foot trailer with 6 horses in it, loaded with camping equipment headed up the mountain road. He was used to pulling a little 2 horse bumper trailer to roping's so that qualified him. What could possibly go wrong? Well pretty much everything, except getting someone hurt.

We started picking up cattle as soon as we left camp, however it was only a few head so that wasn't to bad. We did start picking up lots of cattle just a short distance from where we had left them

the previous day. Again we were dealing with heat issues and today's trek was one that every step forward was also a step uphill. I knew today's push was going to be a real challenge and it was everything I expected. Actually we didn't get the herd as far as I had hoped. We finally dropped them at Bear Springs on good water and hoped that some of the native cows would take a lead and the bought cows would follow. We dropped the herd at Bear Springs because it was 3:30 in the afternoon and it was a 3 hour ride still to camp. Not one person said a word about not getting enough riding. We rode into camp about 6:30 that evening exhausted but our spirits were up when we saw camp in the distance. As we rode into camp I noticed the Gator was not there which meant someone was still hauling in a load of goods. This concerned me until I rode into camp and discovered the Gator hauling the last load was the least of my problems. Jake came running out and said "Uncle Dana I wrecked your pickup". As the story unfolded it was obvious how lucky that the only damage was to the pickup and trailer. One horse had a slight ding on him and the rest were completely fine. Jake wasn't hurt so that was a plus. Now on the negative side the consensus was that my pickup was totaled and it was. Of course when this happened they were still about 12 miles from camp and still had to get everything in and set up for the cowboys coming with the cattle. Dinner was a little late that evening but I have to say, there was not one complaint from anyone. What a great bunch of people. Anyway that is one 4<sup>th</sup> of July that I really hope doesn't repeat itself.

#### **July 5<sup>th</sup>:**

Several people wanted to go back after the cattle today but I knew we would have to go back to the very bottom and start over. That is a 5 to 6 hour ride. If a person went back by the time you got to the bottom the heat would be extreme and you wouldn't get anything accomplished. So we had a leisure breakfast and let people sleep in that wanted to. We had had a very intense week. Trent and Taylor took those that wanted, fencing for the day and I took those that wanted, on a sightseeing trail ride. I took my group up through Center trail to the top of the rims and then off the Charlie Miller trail and back to camp. This loop was about a 5 hour ride. The other group that was fencing got into camp about the same time we did. The only complaint I heard was Dan Connelly who was pounding staples into the wood posts, missed the staple completely 3 different times and hit himself in the wrist. Most people when they miss a staple hit their thumb. However, in Canada they must do things differently than we southerners. However, the winner of the white bags that evening was Von Brady. As we rode up to camp she commented that the drain tile in the Moose Hole must really be working well to continually drain that much water. This caused much chuckling among the crew because the pipe is a piece of 10 ft plastic pipe stuck into a hillside into a spring to catch the drinking water. We asked just what type of equipment she thought we could get in here to do a project like putting drain tile in a 5,000 acre pasture, when the only equipment allowed would be a shovel. It's not like Von's comment was stupid, it is just that it takes very little to amuse a bunch of cowboys!

That evening we had a few showers roll through and a few people got slightly wet during the night. On the mountain because everything is either up or down generally people get wet because they slide part way out the bottom of their tent during the night. Little did we know, that was the last shower for the summer. It turned off very hot and dry the rest of the summer.

#### **July 6<sup>th</sup>:**

We saddled up and headed to Lake Creek around 10:00 am and arrived at Lake Creek mid afternoon. We turned the horses loose, jumped in the horse trailer and headed to the lodge for a shower before the evenings festivities. The night at the banquet is the first night in a bed, the first time people have been completely clean for an entire week. That alone brings out lots of celebration. As I have stated in the past, there is always someone who comes out of the week and really puts on a celebration. We don't know if it's because they are clean, happy to have survived, or just elated at what

they have witnessed not only from Natures standpoint, but what they have witnessed in themselves during the week. Well, anyway this time the guest who went completely off the deep end was all the way from Belgium. His roommate certainly had his hands full during the travel home I'm sure. The bus pulled up the next morning to pick people up to take them back to the airport. We tallied everyone in except our Belgium guest. We looked in the bar first as it was possible he was still there under a table somewhere. We then pounded on his door and heard all kinds of scurrying in the room. Clarke was trying to stumble to his suitcase, get packed and out the door. When Clarke arrived at the bus I took one look at him and felt sorry for Marc. It's a long way to Belgium in that condition. We got them on the bus, shut the door waved good by and said poor Marc. I arrived home a couple hours later to get a phone call from Bear Lodge. They had a bag of clothes that had been found in the room occupied by the two gentleman from Belgium. After seeing Clarke it was not a surprise at all. You could have told Clarke he had to ride a mule to the airport and he wouldn't have known the difference. Matter of fact, you could have strapped him over a mule like a dead body and he wouldn't have known the difference. The truly amazing thing is the fact that they both have rebooked and are coming on this year's Clean Up Ride. Maybe Clarke is coming back to find his clothes, who knows!

Anyway, I want to thank everyone for their help during the week. It was a very trying trip with the new cows and the extreme heat. Even with all of that I actually had a great week!

COW BOSS