

04/23/92 **SHORTGRASS COUNTRY BY MONTE NOELKE**

Doctors out on the West Coast claim day dreaming weakens the eyesight. Their contention is the brain and the eyes must be in contact at all times, or serious damage will occur to people's vision.

At the last big cow sale in San Angelo, just looking around the audience, it did seem a big majority of the folks were wearing glasses up in the sellers' and spectators' sections. Buyers appeared to be either more sharp sighted or hiding behind contact lenses to conceal their disadvantage. Conclusions are difficult to make on such a wily breed as cattle traders. One might be wearing dark shades to avoid eye contact, where another might have on thick lenses to cover up his mistakes.

Also, hombres in the buyer's row who have lasted long enough to develop the defects of old age have been through so may dramatic pitfalls and spectacular upturns, and their calendar of life is so irregular, about the only way to pinpoint any of their symptoms is by an autopsy, and even as big gamblers those ringside pitmen are, they'd probably want to took at other options.

No doubt the daydreaming wasn't happening above the buyer's pit. Bids on slick tigerstripe pairs and heavy bred black muleys, or the sizes of the bids are bound to have been based on a far-off dream world.

Loss of contact, you'd think, in a room full of caps with "First National This" and "Farm Credit That" for ought to snap a full fledged, fully certified guru in deep meditation back to his senses. As many red and white Production and Credit labels there are around those gatherings, it looks like it'd take a story teller in the league of Aesop to generate that much distance from reality.

The big mystery in our game is when is the best time to take off your glasses. Is a herder better off out at the ranch stumbling over the feed buckets, or is he more sensible when driving through town, deliberately bypassing his feed store, and endangering the lives of other motorists.

The litany of ranch experts is to keep good records to know for certain what can be paid for a production unit. But omitted from this sage advice is supposing a set of records are balanced and figured down to a centimeter of a small square on a sheet of graph paper. All goes fine until the record keeper goes into town to see what cows are bringing and develops such a hot case of fever for a pen of 25 young gray humpy cows that it makes the worst attack of heat stroke that ever happened in Death Valley seem like a green river frog drying out on a lily pad.

Unless all those records, including the filing cabinet and the general ledger, aren't tied around his neck, how's

going after those flop-eared cows like they were the last cloven footed beasts on this earth.

California doctors may know a lot about eye care, but they must not have many hollow horn traffickers for patients. History doesn't say so, but ranching was probably started by one big dreamer and broken down into the dreamlets we spread today.