

AUGUST 19, 1982

Money problems in Mexico wrecked last week's packer ewe market in San Angelo. The devaluation of the peso took \$4 off the ewe prices. Heavy lambs were already in a devaluation pattern without being faintly connected to the international trade. So they lost the same as the old ewes, I suppose just to even off the week's woes for sheepmen.

Thirty years ago, woolies were really a big deal in the Shortgrass Country. Along about the first of September in those times the Mexican government would have had to make a personal appearance in Angelo to dampen the sheep market. Action then ran into tens of thousands of lambs or old ewes. Widespread rain clouds and fair-fetched dreams sparked those markets. I don't know how much money those guys made from their deals, but the volume sure stirred up a lot of work and plenty of dust to make a fall shipment come about.

Nowadays the coyote has squeezed the sheep country down so small that the market sorely misses the outlying farmers and ranchers who once swarmed into ringside eager to buy all the solidmouths in town plus a load of light lambs to sweeten the trade. It doesn't seem so long ago that grain patches inspired lamb buyers to be wild and foolish. Perhaps it's still the case and I've been unlucky enough to miss those deals.

I did hear the other day that coyotes were being controlled by a sound system that played music in the pastures. According to one of my neighbors, this electronic shepherd, as it's called, plays everything from hymns to hard rock to scare off the coyotes.

He says the church music works best. The reason that's true is because coyotes have become accustomed to hearing old kids prowling around all hours of the night playing love songs and dancehall ditties to the degree that they aren't frightened of those tunes.

As smart as coyotes are, they learn to ignore such night sounds as beer coolers closing and pickup doors rattling. Folks who played church music were out of their range and on a different schedule.

I know it's true. Back when our kids were teenagers, and they had their tapes going at high decibel, our home was pest-free. We didn't have to buy any mothballs or mousetraps for years. The front yard was free of ant dens; in wet years, mosquitoes never came closer than a couple of city blocks of our house.

The bad part about the loud music after the first shock was the way that it knocked the chinking from the rock portion of the house. I mean I liked not having any stinging scorpions or spiderwebs, but I'd sure flinch when I saw Child Who Sits in the Sun sweeping out a bit of the house everytime she cleaned the floors.

I learned a whole lot of sign language somewhere between the Beatles and the Rolling Stones era. We still don't get good TV reception in some of the rooms. I guess it takes a long time for sound waves to return to normal. Lamb prices have been unstable for weeks. I'd have contracted ours earlier but I didn't want to be a big showoff in such tedious times. I keep trying to think of a choir that might eliminate the coyotes in our country. I just wonder how much television a wolf could stand.