

SEPTEMBER 6, 1984

Drouth action is heavy enough on baled goods that one supermarket over in San Angelo has alfalfa out front where they once kept watermelons and yard fertilizers. On the day I saw the bay, I didn't ask the check out clerks if they'd be adding bedding straw and dried out hulls to complement their new lines, as tending to my own affairs has become a six-man job without including the roughage department of a fancy supermarket in the deal.

For certain, having hay around the store isn't going to encourage the ranch trade to buy more groceries. I know after I spotted it, I substituted canned tuna for rib-eye and made other protein alterations that are certainly not in keeping with my appetite but work well with my income.

The grocery business must be hurting to add hay to the inventory. I feel sure it's intended for pets and kid ponies. I see old gals pushing carts around the bakery department, however, that could use a switch over to a filler like alfalfa instead of so many angel food cakes and chocolate éclairs. The hot dry weather hasn't put the shrink on any of us that summer normally does. I've thought several times of reapplying to Weight Watchers before the fall rush hits their Program.

I do wish I'd asked whether the hay was going to be sold by the bale or the chip. Right south of the store about two miles, a hay farmer has a big sign offering his product at \$2.50 a bale before 3 p.m. and an evening rate of \$2. He's right across the road from a popular watering spot. It could be that he's copying their happy hour prices instead of competing with the supermarket. That I really don't know.

Whatever his policy is based on, anyone smart enough to raise hay close to San Angelo in a year like this one sure doesn't need a sheepherder for an advisor. Hombres capable of selling baled waste weeds and August frizzle grass need a sheepherder for a partner about as much as a kangaroo needs a hip pocket. I wish I'd been a lot less turned to being a cowhand and a lot more eager to ride tractors and combines. I had a chance one time of putting in a row crop; but oh no, I just had to keep messing with humpies and woolies until all my chances were gone.

The drouth has been over since the middle of August. It just hasn't started raining yet. The difference is being able to tell a dry spell from a recovering dry spell. Bankers and other hardnoses think we have to have floods to stop weather failures, but I think the drouth has lost its grip. Other than a few economic adjustments, all will be forgotten in five or so years.

I'm going to town this afternoon to buy out the grocery store's first offering. Lots of times city guys are slow to catch on to how to run a feed store. I'm going to leave the other old boy with a different price range alone. He probably closes every day at 3. On the same track, he'll be the smartest of the two. You don't get to be a hay farmer by buying a store license. It takes a lot more savvy than that.