

## Mediations On Bull Quality

Outside Fences Can Be Too Good For Improvement Of Your Calf Crop

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MERTZON — The early December sale of Angus bulls over in the Wool Capital draws the boot-and-hat set in swarms. Hombres from every part of the Shortgrass County gather at the auction. Way before the auction starts, the lobby and coffee shop are full of men discussing the pampered product out in the pens and rehashing the usual palaver that cow people are always spreading around.

Prior to each sale, I encourage our neighbors to patronize the event. When you don't have fancy outside fences, it pays to see that the surrounding outfits buy registered stock. The best advice along these lines is, "If you are aiming for free bull service, shoot for the best that can be obtained."

Every time I hear one of those high powered bull peddlers say that good bulls don't cost, they pay, I get all misty-eyed and clobbered up with emotion around the valve coverings of my heart.

This is the gospel truth. An unplanned outer-boundary breeding problem could wreck an outfit backed by the Rockefeller Institute. Without helping your neighbors select good cattle, you can end up with string of hair ball calves so spotted they couldn't be sold at a garage sale. Mixed-blood calves are popular, but that doesn't mean that the buyers want one that can poke his head through a sheep-proof fence, or one that sharpens off on the tail to the point where he's apt to cut a hole in the same fence.

Management experts don't know about this type of insemination. The paper and ink boys don't even have a name for the process.

Actually, it doesn't matter whether the know-it-alls ever learn that proper management can yield 30 or 40 free calves a year. The important thing about propagating the bovine species by water gaps and weak wire is to run up a good score while everybody is busy shearing or away on vacation, and let those town-based advisors blab themselves silly about other matters.

In better times, bulls could be borrowed. My Uncle Goat Whiskers used to be a dependable source of a long age yearling or two every breeding season. I'd go over to his place along in March and tell a sufficiently sad story to borrow at least one bull.

Uncle Whiskers evidently left some notes about this custom in his last will and testament, because ever since Goat Whiskers the Younger took charge, we've considered ourselves mighty lucky to get off with a piece of rawhide, much less a whole ox. The newspaper are certainly correct when they say the younger generation is going to pieces.

Whiskers the Younger hasn't been the only one to tighten up. The other neighbors are grown closer than a violin player's viewpoint.

It's got to where an old fence-lifting bull had better take a quick cure or he'll end up making that fateful trip to the sausage mill. Those confounded packers have run bull prices up so high that the owners are just looking for an excuse to send the son of Prince Hijacker out of Sack-A-Day to the auction ring.

At one time, I remember, a visiting bull could make 40 trips a year back and forth across the fence. Today the nephew of Black Hocks by Feather Loin can hardly poke his snoot under the wire before the pickup is being gassed for a trip to town.

No wonder the meat counters are overstocked with luncheon loaf, what with folks being so fussy over the bulls that won't stay home.

Christmas is close at hand. Perhaps the season of goodness will soften our neighbor's hearts.

I can see one thing for certain: If half the people that went to this sale bought bulls, there sure will be a lot of muley cattle wandering around next spring.