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Abundant fall rains kicked off a tick epidemic in this part of the Shortgrass Country. Big fierce grey ticks have been feasting on the horses' and cows' hides. With feed selling at what it is, a strong case can be made against supplementing parasites. All week long, we have been spraying cattle.

In the course of the work, we have also been vaccinating for anthrax. I doubt that the proper immunity level is being reached. Ticks are sucking the blood from the old cows so fast that we may be producing an anthrax-immune breed of ticks.

I started out giving three cc of vitamin A to the grown cattle. But after the first round, we found some ticks that were so hopped up on "A" that they were rolling the salt blocks away from the watering.

The South Texas cow jungle, as I once reported, has a brand of ticks that'll make these up here long for a quiet corner in a blood bank. Ticks in the jungle drink the wild humpy cattle's blood until they won't bother the English breeds of cattle. Once they have few draughts off the Brahman's, any other blood is too mild.

The extra expense of working our cattle is going to have to be amortized on a long scale. Unless we are lucky and get a mortal reaction from the insecticide, the spray is going to have to last three years to pay out.

Hombres out here have gone back to watching such matters mighty close. Mineral supplements, for example, are going back to the old days of ashes and white salt. Old sisters that spent the boom years lapping up fancy blocks and mineral recipes are going to have to learn to eat bones to supply their phosphorus requirements. It'll help us a whole lot to have the bitterweed sheep casualties cleaned from the pastures. Boneyards aren't included in the romance of the rangelands.

Ticks are like a lot of the enemies of the fourlegged animal game. Not a swift form of extermination, but a slow, gradual process. I sometimes think that an epidemic of tigers would be the merciful thing to happen. Tigers wouldn't leave them around to doctor and pamper.

It is a big relief to be back working cattle that you don't have to worry about. Last year, one hanging her leg In the chute or running into a fence was serious accident that stopped the whole crew. At today's prices, hindlegs aren't worth much on men or beast. I knew that nobody cared about us when the President said we were going to have to bite lead bullets. Lead is a poison and a two-bit dentist knows that it'll turn your mouth green.

Bad times haven't ruined the fun of a roundup. Young boys flanking calves are good sport. Sometimes in the flurry of the bawling and bucking, I forgot our troubles.

Things will change back. Our money will be gone, but our spirit will be strong.