

Weekend Moisture Is Most Welcome Beyond City Limits

By Monte Noelke

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MERTZON — A soft rain was falling over the Shortgrass County last weekend as this was written. It was the best kind of moisture, we could hope for — not a drop running off. On the way home from San Angelo, I heard a sports commentator on the radio saying the wetness was going to spoil the first football game of the year. He said if it didn't clear off right away, the home team wouldn't have a chance of completing one pass.

I got to thinking how much the rain was going to disrupt a lot of other people's plans. About an hour earlier, a bunch of hombres hanging around the hotel lobby were talking as if their own passing game was going to turn into a no-hitter, shutout sort of a deal if they didn't get a shower pretty soon.

One of them reported that the calf buyers in the Midwest were developing a bad case of what used to be called cattle rustling and is now known as discounting the price on heavy calves. He claimed if he could just get those big old calves standing in a little green feed, he might have a chance of arguing with the buyers. As it was, he felt that as the cattle grew bigger, he was growing weaker.

Another hombre was moaning even louder about his calves being so light. He said he'd just left the marketing area feeling so low that he was glad a train didn't come by; he was afraid he might have thrown himself under the cars. His buyer, he said, had made him believe that the nearest order for calves weighing under 400 pounds was in lower New Zealand.

Then a fellow sitting next to him said that others in the group ought to be thankful their calves were either light or heavy. His story was that he had cow brutes that would suit everybody from yearling buyers to customers who wanted calves to put on a nurse cow, but the only interest he'd found for any category was from a lady tourist who climbed his fence to take a picture of Texas cattle in a dry setting.

Anyway, as I drove along watching the clouds build up, I felt sorry for the football addicts and the aforementioned ranchers. The sport fans, it seemed, weren't going to know if they could have won on a dry track. And judging from the intensity of the rain, it appeared that the ranchers were going to get enough moisture to make them hold on to their calves until they were longtailed yearlings.

On top of that, this rain was going to cause traders to spend a bunch of money calling the up-country feeder; new bargaining stories would have to be manufactured, and that type of creative effort takes a lot out of a man.

County people keep forgetting that a weekend rain has often messed up everything in the city and the corn country, ruining margins on feeder cattle as well as the attendance at sporting events. And it's not going to change. City folk and traders will never really love us a long as we worship black clouds.