

High water hit us again last week. Really a bad one. Hailstones cutting down grass and bombarding little lambs' heads. Fence damage that reached way up on high ground and drift that covered up roads and trails.

It was a thriller. You know what hail damage will do to the grasslands. Hail will make a herder draw up and whistle louder than a pressure leak on a gas line. You better believe that the victims of hail storms are going to feel pains in their scar tissue that they've never felt before.

Fellow at the coffee house said the reason he hated floods was the way they upset his plans at the ranch. Plans, executed or interrupted, are the least of our worries. The longest range planning that we ever do is the decision whether to keep up the saddle horses at night.

In all the banks over in the San Angelo area there are signs asking if you've planned your estate yet. I talked to my banker about estate planning. He's the one who is always tying up everything I own from my wrist watch to my saddle horse, so I figured he better be prepared for the day I won't be around to bring in the sales receipts.

I assured him I'd leave a legible tally book on the pasture counts. After these many years together, I owe him that much. Also, I asked him to cooperate with the IRS. There never is much inheritance tax due on livestock; nevertheless, the tax agents and I have had close working relations on other matters throughout the seasons. Being a man of peace, I hate to think of the keepers and the tax harvesters fighting over a pickup load of cutback lambs or a few light calves because of me. You can't leave any protection in your will against banks or the government disagreeing. It's flat impossible to disinherit a chartered bank or an agency of the Federal government.

Before the flood, I had made some plans. I'll admit that I did intend to shop the February lambs the last week of May. However, that had to be changed. Closest shipping trap left fenced is over on our neighbor Goat Whiskers the Younger. By the time we'd driven the lambs there to wean, it'd be more sensible to keep going on west in hopes that a Colorado buyer would take them f.o.b. his pens.

Furthermore, we are going to have to re-audit the shipment. I counted 17 head in the draw yesterday that are only good for the crows to use to line their nests with dead wool. I think instead of planning when to ship, the problem is going to be to find something to ship.

Anyway, operating a ranch like we do without a program isn't so disappointing in hard times. I'm going to go on and vote the rain ticket in spite of the bad flood. I imagine we'll gather some lambs to sell about the first of August.