

JULY 28, 1977

Thirty some odd cases of screwworms have been reported in Texas this year. Compared to the epidemic of internal parasites in sheep, the screwworms sound extinct. I figure that within a day's pickup drive from the ranch there's 500,000 cases of stomach worms. Judging by the way the woolie operators are buying medicine, their suppliers are going to have to close a month early at the end of the year to sort out their deposit slips.

The old boy who contracts our work is a compadre of mine. I refer to him as a sheep doctor, but actually he's just a wised up herder who is energetic enough to do a lot of hard work. All year long, he burns up the highways tearing from contract job that labor short ranchers can't start to accomplish.

Terrible thing about the worms this year, the wormers aren't working. We've used three different brands. Not any of them are giving the results that they have on other years.

I thought at first that we were dealing with an immunity situation. Yesterday, however, I discovered that my partner had changed his recipe. Last year he was using the city water from over at San Angelo to mix the drench. This summer he's been using the water here at the ranch to make his formula.

It made me plenty sore that he'd switched. I'd known a long time that the chlorine-laden water was part of the secret of a good worm medicine. In the days when San Angelo's likes were nearly dry, after a kid was weaned over there, the pediatricians never thought of testing for stomach worms. After the city ran a pipeline to a salty lake up north, you could tell by the flesh condition of the old boys hanging around coffee houses living on sweet rolls and doughnuts that the water was cleaning them up.

Lots of the ladies that had to join Weight Watchers weren't overeating as much as they were receiving a better rate of gain from the benefits of the water.

It was exactly like doctoring a string of those light yearlings that come out of the South. People that moved to town perked up in about a week or two. From then on the conversion was twice what it'd been on other city water systems.

Some of the most fastidious citizens were hard to start on the water. I don't mean they got the dry mouth. I mean that in order to get them to drink free choice, they had to splash enough water on their faces in the morning to neutralize the odor. Once they had the smell on them, they could drink eight glasses a day without ever knowing it from fresh water.

Next week, I'm going to drench a small bunch with straight San Angelo water. I'll let you know how the deal turns out. Can't ever tell, San Angelo might become a popular health resort.