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John Noelke, my son the sculptor, is opening an organic lamb business in Connecticut. He bought 25 of the ranch's lambs to be slaughtered in Mertzon and shipped in a freight-saving supermarket container.

Our lambs are one hundred percent organic, unless nursing a ewe maintained before and after lambing on mesquite grass, well water and white salt contaminates the definition. Too, the slimmer the profit margin becomes on woollies, the more organic the product becomes. Furthermore, veterinary medications no longer carry recommendations for sheep dosage, as the FDA laws are too restrictive and demand too small to justify the big expense of extra research.

Herders, hollow horn and sheep variety, however, are as good at improvising as jazz musicians. We descend from bloodlines going back to the age of wood ashes and bulk kerosene as the basic animal health remedies. Fractions may have befuddled us in school, but today we have become wizards at converting the dosage for an 1100-pound cow to doctor a 130-pound ewe from a medicine labeled "for bovines only."

At one time, I was licensed by the state to buy pesticides and herbicides. By studying the prescribed

courses on poisoning boll weevils and calculating the amount of herbicide needed to spray a cotton patch, I was awarded a license to legally buy two products used on a ranch. Dry weather ended the need for both products. As proud as I was of my license and as privileged as I felt to have prosperous cotton farmers for classmates, I remembered how tired I was of repetition after all those years in the fifth grade and dropped the course.

Connecticut has a hot market for organic food. Supplement magazines in newspapers carry advertisements for organic dairy products. My son Ben Noelke suggested we research the market the next wet spring. Several of the older crossbred cows give more milk than the calves drink. The humpy heritage is strong enough they won't allow other calves to steal milk. If Ben will take a leave of absence from his bank-examining job, we might have a genuine source of organic milk, not to mention the amount of organic fertilizer produced when the milking starts in the squeeze chute. (The Brahman cattle descend from the sacred cattle of India, but the charm seems to wear off in circumstances where these humped beasts are in close quarters with Western man.)

In other times, we snubbed and hobbled baldfaced range cows to do the spring milking at the line camp. The camp

man raised dogie lambs on his milk cow. He preferred the milk from the range cows for his coffee and his oatmeal. We never had a better hand in the rocks and brush on the east side. Charged on wild cow milk, he'd bring his quarry to the herd no matter how slick the ledge rock, or how thick the mesquite limbs.

I witnessed the same reaction once among the horsemen in Lower Mongolia, training on wild mares' milk. Those sword-swinging cavalymen mounted on 16-hand Russian Thoroughbred horses made the high pitch of "the charge of the light brigade" look like a Welch pony quadrille performing on the lawn of Lady Peabody's estate.

One winter in Mertzon in my boyhood, I delivered milk to a lady raised in the backcountry. She sent my jugs back washed. More good will was exchanged than coin. Raw milk was safe in those days. The drinking was safe, but the taking might not be. David Farrington's family had a half-Jersey and half-humpy cow. The only thing she hated more than a dog was a man. Ol' Dave had to be plenty fast to milk her before she finished her feed and began trying to kick off her hobble and break loose from the head catcher to chase Dave and his dog from the pen.

The Fourth of July holidays delayed shipping the dressed lamb north. John reports a problem convincing

prospects the lambs are organic and not a product of New Zealand via the big grocery chain H.E.B. However, Texas sheep buyers are big skeptics, too. I told him to just be thankful it's origin that's bothering his customers instead of some of the grief his old dad suffered from Angelo traders over weighing conditions.

Grass is green at the ranch. I am going to watch the late calving cows for prospects for an organic dairy. Might perk us all to have a glass. Be worth a try just to see sparks come back to life..