

Ranch Timetables Unaffected By Mere Movement Of The Hour Hand

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MERTZON — Daylight Saving Time has thus far proved to be one city-spawned device that has not upset any of us outlanders. The entire ranch community remains unchanged by the new schedule. Judging from what I've been able to observe in the last few days, the calendar could be revised to the Eskimo system of marking time, and it wouldn't bother us one bit.

The transition hit this outfit during the annual spring sheep gathering exercise. While the bleating flocks of hungry ewes and lambs were cutting and re-cutting the dry ground, the time change went into effect without visibly altering our program.

The younger men, for example, continued to set up a howl about how hungry there were exactly 36 minutes after breakfast. As it has been since the days of the sun dials, they maintained their moaning right up to the lunch hour.

The older hand's customary griping about the large amounts of non-essential noise and inexcusable day dreaming by the novices fell at precisely the same time as it has for ages.

At the bunkhouse, the lady doing the cooking religiously maintained her schedule of complaints about the stove. As regularly as the guard is changed at Old Bailey, she continued to denounce over-hungry cowboys and poorly ventilated kitchens. A series of cup towel stomping episodes hit exactly at the same time these tirades had been falling for years.

Only once did I detect any bad reaction to the new system. One of the 20-year-old boys, on the last morning of lamb marking, did complain that he was having a difficult time adjusting to the curfew hour. He said that the night before he had overshot his normal bedtime by five hours due to the time change. I'm prone to believe the lad was shaken by the experience, because all during the morning his attacks on the water barrel gave definite indications that he must have been on a long, hard, forced march in his nocturnal wanderings.

The sheep didn't respond in the changeover. The sun was barely peeking over the hills when the ewes started leading their lambs to the shady hiding spots. Although no time records were available, it seemed to take just as many hours to chouse these brush-spoiled old sisters out in the open as it did under the old fashioned way of telling time.

But you know, I never expected that we'd get an answer to any of our problems merely by setting the clock up. After all these years of counting time by the distance between rainy spells, a new method has little chance of reaching us. Saving hours, days, or stockpiling months doesn't mean much to our people so long as the various periods being logged are dry as this spring has been.

I do wish that all the woes of ranchdom could have been solved by the new process, but I guess it'll rain some day.