

Shortgrass Area's Long Wet Spell Sprouts Tension

By Monte Noelke

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MERTZON — The Shortgrass County as been wet for 50 days. In many spots, clear water is running down the cow trails, and mouse-eared weeds are popping up everywhere. An old cow or mother ewe with the slightest desire to live can rustle up a small amount of greenery.

The abnormally wet winter is creating a delicate situation among our citizens. As the dampness has persisted week after week, people have formed two factions, the "wets" and the "drys."

The wet coalition is headed up by ranchers who survived, or nearly survived, the dry scourge of the 1950s. The entire existence of these old mossbacks (that's what their enemies call them) revolves around a fanatical belief that rain is the solution to all the woes of ranchdom. These hombres wouldn't endorse dry weather if they had to wade to their barns chin-deep in flood water. They wouldn't pray for a clear day if everything they owned was in the process of being loaded or herded onto an ark.

The "dry" faction is made up mainly of housewives. In private ("double top secret" would be more precise terminology), these females are known as "SSSC," an abbreviation for "Shortsighted Sister of the Shortgrass Country." Since members of this camp are presently in a mood to challenge the first string of the Dallas Cowboys to a barehanded fist-fight, I can't overstress the discretion with which they are discussed.

Of the two groups, the "drys" have thus far been most active. Wherever husbands gather over coffee, it's quite common to overhear tales of some beleaguered housewife sorting and sifting a bunch of house-ridden kids with her broom; or a man's account of having dropped by a neighbor's home just as the neighbor's wife put the cat, the dog, the children and the neighbor to flight.

You can appraise the seriousness of the matter just by driving around town. Even a bachelor would notice the high velocity of broom-driven mud clods hurtling out of front doors. A person suffering from radiation blindness couldn't miss the urgency of the front porch mop-wiring episodes. And it wouldn't take a super precocious quiz kid to understand that his mother was plenty out of sorts the second time in a single morning she kicked a plastic laundry basket hard enough to throw the switch on the washing machine.

The outcome of the schism between the wets and drys rests on two possibilities: if the sun comes out and spring flowers blossom this month, the quarrel will be forgotten; but if the rains continue and fatherhood becomes synonymous with cloudy weather, the top platoon of the Green Berets won't be able to quell the outbreak of violence.

At this writing, our wisest sages are at a loss to explain the astounding change in our weather pattern. Who would have dreamed the Shortgrass Country would come under a siege of wetness?

And although, in view of the feeling of tension that enshrouds the land, I'm not going out and say that a little sunshine would help this old country, for once I will say that a brief spell of balmy weather would certainly lessen the pressure on the domestic front.