

Wild turkeys have started the spring nesting. Peacocks around the ranch are screaming in the season change. Some wildflowers are blooming in the roadways. Nature is ready to announce spring, be it wet or dry.

Our feed bill was twice as high as last year's. Figures, however, don't mean much on a ranch. Part of the cake for the old cows can be charged back to a loss on a string of yearlings. Death loss on the ewes can be spread to the small lamb crop to be distributed in the red ink on the calves next fall.

By the time this accounting method is cycled, the bank and the I.R.S. are going to be the only dissatisfied parties. I figure with their vast experience in finance and deficit auditing, they'll be protected against the shock.

My partners certainly don't have any complaint coming, Entering into or engaging in a livestock partnership is voluntary. Nowhere in the statutes of the state of Texas is a citizen held in the traffic on hollow horns or trade in woolies against his will. Nor are there any grounds to prosecute a citizen who entices a consenting adult to enter into such an agreement. Like I'm going to tell them, if they hadn't been so greedy and shortsighted, they could have donated their money to the Y.M.C.A. and given their time to their family.

I don't have any patience at all with folks who can't take 10 or 15 years of steady disappointments. Old man Goodnight didn't build his cattle kingdom on crying towels. Depressions and bad winters spice that cattle game. The fellow that can't stand a banker's glare across the desk, or his wife crying in her sleep, ought to train lap dogs or be in the candy business.

Sure livestock bankers and ranch wives need sympathy. So do shoe cobblers, traffic cops, and mayors of large cities. I suppose as far as that goes cab drivers, airline stewardesses, and school board members live tragedies that shade Mr. Shakespeare's best drama a rosy pink.

Everybody has trouble. The thing is, holding a grudge against the source of the trouble is wrong. I traded four good mares and colts for Child Who Sits in the Sun. To this day she not only refuses to speak to her family, but hates horses so bad that she throws rocks at the Shetland ponies around Mertzon.

Along about our wedding anniversary, she gets in a black mood. You've never known real sarcasm until you hear an Indian woman sing "Oh Promise Me" in her native tongue.

I see the same fault in bankers. Tell them a story in the fall and they'll hold you to it forever. I'd be some kind of customer, telling the truth! I despise to hear one open with "I thought you said last fall that so-and-so was going to happen." What do banks expect from a fellow? I am not a livestock market analyst nor a weather forecaster. That's impossible. I bet too much on the weather and market to hold those jobs.

I've been preparing a closing statement for the partnership. Salt and minerals are going to have to be charged against the Spanish goats. \$3500 with of hunting lease income will go to balance two bad calls on the steer market and one raise too many at a bull sale. I think it is all going to be so shocking that the sad part will never be known.

On years like this, I wish the government would step in and relieve our misery. If nothing else, the state government could pass a law making it illegal for a man to own more cows than one woman can milk.

I'm sure down below the dumps. In the next boom, look for me around the cash in window.