

## New Yorkers Can't Take Drouth; They Never Heard Of Burning Pear

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MERTZON, Texas — Days have passed while I've been making up my mind whether to chance discussing the drouth that the New York water shortage has imposed on penthouse and window sill gardeners in that huge metropolis.

As is well known by anybody who has ever marketed anything on four legs, from a pet coon to a fence-breaking bison, livestock buyers in this country are the most resourceful in the world when it comes to using any weather disaster — major or minor — to justify breaking the market 50 cents to \$1 cwt.

However, a lady columnist has already revealed that New York window and roof top agriculturists are so desperate as to consider appealing to Mr. Johnson to bring in federal aid. Now I feel that we West Texas ranchers and inventors of dry weather, can not turn our backs on those far-removed, high-up tillers of the soil.

We must sympathize with them. For even though the native New Yorker is able to cope with a fog of air so impure that, were it condensed in a test tube and fed to an exceptionally strong-stomached ant eater, it would result in a fit of retching that would make a night club bouncer take notice; the big city dweller is in no condition to face a drouth.

Also, we are honor bound to extend sympathy, at least, to any soul owning a plot of dry dirt — be (it) a box provided for a cat stabled in the house, or an expanse of land like unto the King Ranch. We must rally and send our drouth-stricken fellow agrarians some encouragement, even though we risk giving wily livestock traders the chance to open all their purchasing spiels with a sad tale of the bad drouth on the 32nd floor of such-and-such building on 127th Street, and how this is affecting the price of 400-pound crossbred calves bunched in the southeast corner of a pasture 2000 miles from New York.

If nothing else is sent (needless to say, neither our bankers nor the League of Human decency will allow us to send new Kennedy half dollars or our old clothes), we must at least send them instructions on how to survive a type of disaster most of us were born in and have grown up under.

Therefore I submit a rough draft of a letter that might be rewritten so it will help relieve some of the misery experienced by New York City farmers:

My Dear City Cousin:

I am taking the liberty of offering some counsel in regard to the drouth I understand the petunia beds and other rooftop vegetation is suffering in your city.

As you may know, the section of the country I happen to inhabit has these scourges all the time. Contrary to the popular misconception of non-Texans, dry weather, not reptiles is our biggest problem. What I mean is, the idea held by Easterners that in Texas our trains have to stop for hours to let herds of rattlesnakes pass across the tracks is a myth.

The truth is, the only reason trains ever stop out here is that the dust gets so bad the engineer can no longer see or feel the notches on his throttle.

Of course it will be difficult for me to direct your operation from so many floors and miles away, but I will list some things that will help until the rains come.

1. Do not ask Mr. Johnson to help you out in this disaster. In the first place the Vietnam situation is about to get in bed with him. Secondly, he is from what we call the Hill Country section of Texas and he wouldn't know what to do about a drouth beyond burning prickly pear.

2. By all means, write Mr. Freeman. He is the Secretary of Agriculture and doesn't have the burden of knowing about such crackpot schemes as burning pear and tumbling sotol. He just might send you some money. In case you don't know it, this is one of the most consoling things to have handy during a dry spell.

3. From now on, rotate your crops. That is, plant half the plot one season and the other half next time. If there is a County Agent in Manhattan, he has a whole stack of literature on preparation of the soil for dry weather; and if he is similar to the agents down here, he has all kinds of personal advice on what to do. Even if he doesn't know what action to take, he can refer you to someone in the neighborhood who has written volumes on how to ranch and farm in dry weather. (I may have to strike this from the letter, as I am not certain whether literary drouth experts are based in Manhattan or Boston.)

4. Don't run from the drouth. This is a basic Texas rule and must not be violated. In other words, if it comes a shower over in Yonkers, don't load up and move your petunia plants over there expecting more rain. Just tough it out where you are, or the trucking expense will eat you alive.

5. Avoid joining protest marches or any other movement resembling other agrarian revolts. This will only sap your energy. You must understand the basic characteristics of all drouth. They are not unjust — rich and poor share alike in the misery — and Congress can not give you any special consideration nor for that matter, will Congressmen even pause to listen to our woes.

This by no means covers all of what can be done or what can happen during a drouth. Primarily, I would say the best advice is to sell out. If this is not feasible, grow more fervent in whatever you use for religion. Some temporary relief can be derived from whiskey, and opium or any other derivatives of the poppy plant give superb momentary alleviation of the misery.

Please keep in mind, dear unknown cousin, that our hearts go out to you and we hope it rains for the sake of your daisy crop and your sanity...

This is the first copy of the letter and possibly with the help of some neighbors I can finish it in time to console the poor souls back east. Meanwhile, they can probably hold out by bootlegging a little reclaimed bath water — or do as the lady columnist said, use bottled soda instead of tap water in their hooch.