

OCTOBER 20, 1977

We've been shipping for a month at the ranch. Four of us have worked horseback; two men used pickups. Some mornings we gathered sheep, on others we worked cattle. The days were sad, picking up drouth lambs from ant trails and driving sack-broke old cows that bawled longingly for the feed wagons.

Biggest trouble was working the sheep. Two weeks were spent getting 300 cutback lambs in shape to sell. Once they were delivered to San Angelo, I still had a problem. Sorting dry sick lambs makes antacid pills insoluble. I hadn't felt that bad since the big cow holdup in '73. Crowded alleys and busy loading chutes became dreary reminders that the drouth had hit town, too.

I had a terrible argument with one of the buyers. He cut out a lamb after the weighing that was wobbly. All that was wrong was motion sickness.

Range animals are just like country kids. I've seen a lot of old boys who rode from Mertzon to San Angelo hanging out the windows until they were way up into their whisker age.

I told the lamb buyer if he'd loan me a piece of string, I'd lead the lamb around until he was through being car sick. It's apt to make anything dizzy to take a 60 mile per hour ride on the top deck of a diesel. Smoke boils in on the sheep. That's the objection to dealing with buyers from the west. They live too far inland to know anything about sea sickness.

Main thing that concerned him was that I was upset over one lamb. Drouths do that. In 1954, my Uncle Goat Whiskers missed a directors meeting while trying to keep a 300 pound bobtailed steer in a shipment north. In 1957 I saw a load of heifer calves sorted into pens of five to settle a deal.

I think that's one of the reasons we were so exhausted once the drouth ended. The endless disputes over line-backs and stocking-legs wore us out. I used to dread to put anything up for sale. By the time they were culled, the cuts exceeded the tops.

Part of the ranch looks good. We had .2 of an inch of slow rain in the last week of August. Along the edges of rim rocks, there's a tinge of green. The cubes and the blocks are really going to start rolling in a few weeks. The Shortgrass Country is going to take a cull of her own. I sure wish I'd saved back some money.