

RUMINANT DIGEST #17

11-28-10

I'm sure my thoughts on the past 12 months have been the same as everyone else, "WOW"!!! Where did it all go? I'm going to touch on a few of the going ons here at the Double Rafter. To start out with everyone's health is good which is the main thing. That is the biggest blessing of the year. Mom had hip replacement surgery in August much to the relief of everyone in the family. She is now back to her old self, (ready to charge hell with a bucket of snow) which we are all very thankful for. Dad is still doing methane gas socio-economic studies for the gas companies and continues to put in 45 -50 hours a week at age 78. I probably won't be able to button my own shirts when I'm 78!

THE BARN:

Tyler got married in June at the ranch and it was a very wet week but, the wedding went off just the same. We had a very wet spring here and it rained just about every day until the wedding was over, then it dried up and turned spring. My brother Krayton restored the barn over the winter so we were able to move the wedding into the barn. It was jam packed to the rafters but that was okay. When Tyler and Jill decided to get married at the ranch it was Krayton's idea to restore the barn that was built in 1887 to host the reception for the wedding in. Anyone who knows Krayton knows that he will tackle anything once he sets his mind to it. Since the barn was 123 years old he decided the first thing to do was jack the barn up and put cement footings under it so it will stand the next 123 years. For those of you who haven't seen the barn, my guess is that it is about 55 feet wide and 120 feet long and 30 ft. tall. Krayton and his trophy wife Druann started coming down on Friday evenings and working till Sunday night then going back to work as a veterinarian on Monday. They had to jack the entire barn up in one piece in order to be able to put footings under it. Those of you who have trouble changing a tire can appreciate this little feat. It took about 5 weekends of jacking and bracing things inside so that it would go up in one piece and come down in one piece. Luckily they spent as much time bracing the interior as they did because it sure came down in one piece! They finally had it all jacked up and were planning on coming down a couple weeks later to pour the footings. Well Mother Nature being the practical joker, decided to see how much wind the barn could stand while it was on stilts. We discovered Mother Nature could exert more force than the stilts would hold. When the barn came to a landing on the ground it had moved about 4 feet from the original site and was listing badly to the South. You would have thought it was a death in the family as it really crushed everyone. This was November and with winter fast approaching the decision had to be made to scrap the whole thing and just put in a new barn or try again. Krayton was lucky because down the road 5 miles lived a fellow who has done several barn restorations in his life and since the economy was poor he just happened to be available to start on the barn on Monday. Krayton new he didn't have time so he hired him for the job. The first thing he did was build a crib all the way around the barn so that when he got it jacked back up, if it fell it couldn't fall over just down. Jesse worked all winter and by February

he had the barn all set to pour the footing. At that point in time Krayton decided we could finish the rest ourselves. Four of us poured the footings in the interior of the barn using 2 wheel borrows. We did manage to work up a sweat even though it was a very brisk February day. Of course once the footings were poured and had dried we had to put the floor down. Using 2x8 12 foot planks it only took 5 of us about 2 days to do the floor. The next challenge was that we had to raise the loft about 16 inches higher than it had previously been. A lot of the old walls had a lot of rot on the bottoms so the outside walls were shortened about 16 inches from original barn. Once the walls had been completed this of course lowered the loft by 16 inches which was a problem if you were over 6 foot tall. It wasn't a problem for me but Krayton and his son Tyler couldn't walk around under the loft without slightly having to bend. They are both in that 6'2-6'3 range. To jack the loft up was a major job since the loft could only be lifted a little at a time since the whole loft was one piece. We had 3 jacks for this so we would lift a 10 foot section about 6-8 inches, then fasten it and move on down to the next 10 foot section. After we had done 3 or 4 sections we would then move back to where we started and move the first two sections up to the desired level. This was a very slow tedious job but by 1:00 in the morning we had it finished. We had a major blizzard going on outside so Trent had to stay home so he could feed the next day if I got snowed in at the Rafter. Mom had hot meals ready and plenty of coffee anytime we needed to stop and catch a breather. But if you know Krayton that stop and breather was generally long enough to just stuff a mouthful in and swallow a cup of coffee then back to work. Once all of those things were finished the final phase had to be done which was all the finish work. Unfortunately for Tyler he graduated from college in early May and since it was his wedding he spent the next 30 days doing finish work and wedding work. Tyler says he doesn't really remember the wedding. I'm sure that is the truth. However once it was completed the barn is a truly remarkable piece of work. We have hosted about 3 different parties in there and had a great time. The next time you are out be sure and stick your head in there and look around.

Mom and Dad hosted a community Halloween party in there and the next day we shipped the calves. I rode up to the barn and slid the big door open and turned around to unsaddle a colt I had been riding when a gust of wind blew through the barn. Well with the previous day's Halloween party there had been lots of cobwebs hung for the Halloween effect. It certainly worked on my colt! As the cobwebs blew so did my colt. He was sure the devil had him for the first 20 yards. I had just about finished uncinching when things took off. My saddle was in one pile, my blankets in another and me flying along hanging onto the reins. Once we had the situation under control I couldn't do anything but laugh! Those types of experiences though are what make our horse string so outstanding.

PURCHASE OF NEW FOREST ALLOTMENT:

Last spring I had the opportunity to lease a neighboring ranch and buy his cows. I also purchased his mountain allotment which is in the Dry Fork. I felt the purchase of this additional grass would serve me well down the road for the cattle drives and the ranch for several reasons:

- (1) With all the pressure to continue to cut grazing on public lands by the environmentalist I knew the number of cattle that we are currently running was going to take a significant cut. This of course would be mandated by the Forest

Service and we would be told it was for resource protection. I feel very blessed to have had the opportunity to purchase the Dry Fork. As some of you know the cut we anticipated appears to be in the 45% range. Since our current mountain allotment was a 648 head allotment it's pretty simple to see what sort of cut we were going to get. This of course was going to create a rather substantial problem on the expense side of the ledger, plus a rather large hit to the income side of the ledger as well. Then again when has the government every wanted to do what is right? They are more interested in doing what appears good. Of course we all know appearances can be deceiving!! By purchasing the 185 head Dry Fork allotment we are certainly going to lessen the impact on the ledger. (Again something government has no feel for)

- (2) The Dry Fork allotment fits well enough with our current Lick and Lake Creek allotment so the we should be able to manage the 2 of them together as one unit. We are now of course scattered out over a really huge area of which most of it is more wilderness than anything in the wilderness areas. This will of course create a really great trip for our Beef Roundups. Some of you repeat people, who have come 7,8, 9 times or more will really enjoy this new country. Beauty wise, I think it is more beautiful than anything you have seen yet.
- (3) Where we will camp on the Beef Roundups is what was the original Kerns Cow Camp. This is the country that my dad rode as a little boy and his family was grazing **before** it was a National Forest. So yes, we have made a complete circle with this piece of ground. An interesting side note to the cabin is that it was built about 1933. In 1932 by grandfather and grandmother built a new house on Pass Creek which is the house my father was raised in and is still living in today. When they built this house on Pass Creek they dismantled the original log cabin that they had lived in and transported some of the logs to the site of the Kerns Cow Camp to be used in the construction of the cabin. Since they had to haul a stove in on a wagon they decided to take some logs also. When you see the cabin you will note that it is built in a basin with a very steep hill on the North side. A team pulling the wagon that was carrying logs from the homestead and the stove for the new cabin had to come down off that steep hill. Well the hill was too steep for the team and wagon and it over ran the team. We don't know if the wreck killed the team or they had to be disposed of because of injuries but the team didn't survive the wreck. So the Dry Fork will give you the opportunity to get even closer to our family history than ever before. Dad is planning on coming in during the Beef Roundups and telling some of his childhood history in the Dry Fork.

TAYLORS RUN:

One little story that happened last summer in the Dry Fork was that I had sent Taylor and Bam-Bam in to put up some of the fences. There has been virtually no maintenance of fences in the Dry Fork for at least the last 10 years, and of course we weren't really sure where most of the fences or the water tanks even were. At this point in time we don't even have a horse corral! Around the cabin is a fenced in area about 5 acres in size and since we grain our horses daily as we are using them, catching them is not much of a problem with a pan of grain. I mentioned to Taylor that maybe they ought to go around that fence first before turning any

horses loose. They rode around it when they arrived and pulled it up in a place or two but called it satisfactory to hold a horse. They spent the rest of that day working on a fence that is about ½ mile west of the cabin. Sometime in the evening they called it a day and rode back to camp, turned their horse out, had dinner and went to bed. The next morning they looked out the cabin window and here is a great big bull Moose standing there next to the cabin. They ate breakfast, caught their horses and rode two of them to the fence line and proceeded to work until lunch. Since camp was so close they decided to just ride back and eat lunch. After lunch they decided to walk the half mile back to the fence line instead of leaving their horses tied up like they had all morning. After walking back to the fence line Taylor realized they had left the fence stretchers at the cabin. He told Bam-Bam he would walk back to camp and get the wire stretchers. After walking both directions he decided he would catch a horse, ride him bareback to the fence line then tie the halter up around his neck and turn him loose, sure that he would go back to camp where the other 3 horses were. As soon as he turned him loose Gunner did as expected and headed right back to the camp. When Taylor and Bam-Bam walked back to camp that evening from spending the day fencing in some very tough terrain they discovered there were no horses anywhere! Since Taylor is a distance runner he told Bam-Bam that he would go after the horses while Bam-Bam took care of things around camp. Taylor started up the trail that they had ridden in on and sure enough here were 4 sets of horse tracks headed back towards the trailer which was 8 miles away, and of course all 8 miles were uphill. However, there was hope because ½ mile east of the cabin is another fence that is the boundary fence between us and a neighboring allotment. He knew they had shut the gate when they came in so he had hope, the horses would be standing right there grazing. Sure enough the tracks went right to the gate but no horses. Once the horses hit the gate instead of staying and grazing they had turned down the fence line headed south. The 4 horses went down the fence line about ¼ mile and found a spot the neighbors hadn't fixed yet for the year and through it they went and headed back east towards the trailer. The next fence was about 4 miles so Taylor took off running hoping he would catch them at the next fence standing at the gate. The horse never stopped to graze but walked right along headed back to the trailer. Taylor was running and at the top of each little rise was sure he was going to catch sight of the wandering 4 legged taxis. At the next fence much to his disappointment the horses did the same thing as before. Hit the gate, which was shut and headed down the fence line until they found a hole and through it they went and then they continued on East. Taylor continued to run hoping he would get sight of the horses. When he was about a mile from the trailer and could see it he didn't have much run left in him. They tell me running up hill at that elevation is a problem, but then I wouldn't know, because that's why we have horses!! Once he arrived at the trailer he was completely crushed as he could see no sign of horses other than their tracks that they had been there. He started walking up the logging road towards Lake Creek thinking that was probably the direction the horses had gone. He was looking for tracks but just wasn't finding anything. His heart just dropped. Do you walk the 8 miles back to camp and tell Bam-Bam you can't find

the horses and then walk the 8 miles back to the pickup and trailer, or do you get in the pickup and drive towards Lake Creek which is now 12 miles west of you, assuming the horses would have gone that direction. It's also about 2 hours before dark by this time. Just as he was about to get the pickup and head west he hears thundering hooves running down the logging road coming from the North. When the horses had gotten to the trailer they had headed north into country that none of them had ever been in before. Who would have guessed that! Right behind the 4 horses was a 4 wheeler chasing them. When the horses had showed up at this persons camp and with one of them still wearing a halter with the lead rope tied up around his neck someone figured they had gotten away from someone so he turned them around headed them back from where they had come from. Taylor felt a huge relief because he sure hadn't wanted to call Dad and say the horses got away and we are afoot. It also goes without saying that Dad didn't want to get that phone call either! Since Gunner still had his halter on Taylor was able to walk up and catch him. With many humble thanks to the four wheeler, Taylor thought his problems were over. Well, not totally. The 4 wheeler left and Taylor jumped up on Gunner bareback and attempted to run the horses back down the 8 miles back to the cow camp. Three different times he had them about 3/8 of a mile from the trailer headed towards the Dry Fork when the mare Hoot, would decide she was going back to the trailer. Now being bareback and with only a halter on, about all he could do was sit there and ride the horse race back to the trailer as the group all raced back to the trailer. I know they were thinking that since they had gotten back to the horse trailer that the work week was over. Now all males have seen the effect that a pretty face can have on a group, herd, string or whatever you want to call it. All they have to do is flirt a little bit and a guy is completely helpless to say anything other than yes. Hoot seems to have that effect on the geldings in the string. She would duck back and dart to the trailer and all 3 geldings and Taylor would be headed back to the trailer. Choice wasn't an option. The third time Taylor knew he had to take a different approach. He tied Gunner to the trailer, crawled up in the nose cone of the trailer and much to his delight found an old halter that someone had left there. That was all that was there, one old halter. Now the trick was that he had to catch the pretty face. Hoot is a little tough to catch but apparently the good Lord had decided it was time to stop laughing. I honestly don't know how he caught her, but he did. Once she was caught and he was bareback back on Gunner, he headed back to the Dry Fork, with the two loose geldings following along just like they had halters on. A pretty face is a very powerful thing!!

THE SHOOTING:

Later in the summer Taylor, Alice and I were in the Dry Fork riding on cattle and fixing fence. We had been in two nights and were planning on heading out the next day around noon. Taylor and I left in the morning horseback, looking for a cow that needed doctoring that we had seen the previous week. Alice stayed in camp to clean up around the cabin. Throughout the years lots of hunters have used the camp and they don't always pick up after themselves. Alice started a fire in the fire ring and was picking up garbage and trash and burning it while Taylor and I were riding. Taylor and I rode in around noon to find my wife sitting in a

chair, white as a ghost, with her arm tucked under her other arm like it was cold out. As the fire was burning down she had bent over to stir it with a stick and as she was stirring, there was a loud couple bangs!! The next thing she knew, something hit her hand and blood was running everywhere! She applied pressure to the wound to stop the bleeding but that only worked as long as she kept the pressure on the wound. Taylor and I rode into camp about 30 minutes later. I thought it was strange when we rode in and I could see her sitting in a chair outside the cabin, that she didn't say something or get up to greet us. Taylor and I tied our horses to the hitch rack and Taylor walked over to the cabin to get something and then Taylor yells "Dad, moms been shot"!!! I took one look at her hand and new it wasn't life threatening but also new it needed medical attention. I grabbed my first aid kit which is in my back pack and bandaged her hand up. We bandaged it securely and were able to keep it from bleeding any more. Me, being the gentleman that I am, didn't even ask her to saddle her own horse. As you remember from the previous story it is 8 miles out of there to the nearest vehicle. However, by the time we got her on her horse she said she was feeling better and her color was back to normal. As long as she rode holding the bandaged hand above her heart she said it felt okay. It was throbbing but she said it wasn't anything like child birth so she was fine. We walked right along but it still took 2 1/2 hours to ride out of there. We went straight off the mountain to the emergency room where they ex-rayed it and sure enough you could see something in there. We were very lucky in the fact that where the shrapnel went in, which was between her thumb and forefinger it didn't hit anything else. It missed the bone, ligaments and tendons and was buried in the meaty part of the thumb. As the doctor probed around in there you could hear his instrument grate on the piece of shrapnel. They did get it fished out and of course we kept it for a souvenir. It appears it is a piece of brass off of a shell casing, probably a 22. It was as freak an accident as I have ever seen and we were so very lucky it didn't get an eye or an artery. The ER doctor said he had never seen that before in 22 years of ER work. Since I wrote this story John Barker has looked at the piece of shrapnel and says it's bigger than a 22.

Forest Service EIS:

Many of you are aware of the fact that we had to cancel the June Cattle Drive do to some proposed changes the Forest Service is making. One of the changes would be to move our on date from June 26th June 30th in the Little Horn. July 1st the Lake Creek allotment opens up so in there way of thinking we could then go onto Lake Creek. I don't know if this is a typical case of government making a decision that makes sense to them, but actually having no idea what they really just did. You see the problem with that scenario is that because of the elevation of the Lake Creek allotment it is never ready for cattle until July 10th at the earliest and generally it's July 15th. Now they can say they only moved the on date back 4 days, but what they actually did by doing this was to move the on date back at least 2 weeks. Then on top of that, they said they wouldn't have a final decision until sometime in late February. Late February is too late for us to put a trip together and have it be a profitable venture. A trip with 6 or 8 people on it is

a money losing venture, and this is a business. They also said in their wisdom that we could stay one night in the Little Horn either going to or coming off the mountain with the herd. Here again is another example of government making decisions on something they have absolutely no knowledge of. It would be physically impossible to trail a herd from the forest boundary to the Green Cabin in one day. That would be in the neighborhood of 17 miles uphill of which 10 are on a single file trail. It can't be done. If we spent the one night in the Little Horn on the way out, that would mean leaving the herd (yearlings which are equivalent to teenagers) in the canyon overnight unchaperoned. They would be clear to the top of the canyon walls by daylight and we would be gathering yearlings for a month in the canyon. The problem comes from getting the answers that are wanted from Washington and then making the question fit the answer. We are completely helpless to change this. Groups like the Guardians of the Range are the only way to help slow this process and the only way to stop it, is at the ballot box, and throw out every non constitutionalist. It's really that simple, just not that easy to do. I also can't express enough, my **appreciation to all of you who have joined the Guardians. You have touched me deeply by helping me.**

THANKS!!

I am really looking forward to the two Beef Roundup trips as they will primarily be in the new Dry Fork Allotment. I have completely fallen in love with the isolation of this allotment. The trail we will take out of the Dry Fork next summer to Lake Creek with the herd has only had one other herd taken up this trail we believe since the start of grazing in the Big Horns. We took a test run last summer with about 80 head to see what issues we would face and that was the first herd. Consequently next summer will be a new challenge to everyone who has ever spent a week with us. The beauty of this country is beyond description. I would bet it is more wilderness than any wilderness area in the country.

The Weddings:

Last summer was certainly a busy one for the Kerns family as both Tyler and Trent got married. Tyler and his wife Jill got married at the Double Rafter and Trent and Ali got married here at our place on Bonanza Creek. However, Hop Sing (my mother) wasn't able to join us as she had hip replacement surgery the week before and just wasn't up to getting around on the uneven ground of the creek bottom where Trent and Ali held the ceremony. Both ceremonies were beautiful but exhausting. I threatened Taylor with his life that he better not come home from college in the spring and announce he was getting married. If it happens it better be that he is getting married somewhere else other than the ranch.

CowHerd:

For the last 6 or 7 years we have been primarily running yearlings on the mountain. Trent and I decided that we needed to get back into cows and calves plus yearlings as any of you that were here last summer noticed. The nice thing about yearlings is that once you load them on the truck, they are gone and your work load goes with them. With cows and calves, there is the shipping of the calves, the weaning of the calves, the preg testing of the cows the selling of the

open cows and the selling of the short term cows, and the gathering of the last and lost cattle still on the mountain. When the year was finally over we were missing 3 yearlings and one cow. I guess the bears have to eat to!!! We had a great fall weather wise though. Summer actually lasted about 45 days longer than normal and then we went right into winter. We went from 65 degrees to 15 below in about 2 days and the weather has stayed between 20 below to 20 above for most of the remaining part of the year. However, I will gladly take what we are getting when I hear what the rest of you are getting. Man, you people in the North East are really getting clobbered. Feel free to keep it!

The cattle market has been very good this fall as we are seeing record highs. There is lots of optimism, now if we can only translate that into real dollars. We have been having some problems on the Miller ranch that we leased keeping the elk out of the hay stacks. One stack has been completely ruined; luckily it is a small stack and only has about 15 ton of hay in it. We are going to file a damage claim with the fish and game. I'm sure there will be a glitch or two in the process because you must remember, it is a government agency. The small stack is beyond recovery though. I can tell you one thing for sure; if you have elk around you don't have to test your hay to know which stack has the best hay quality in it. An elk's nose will do it for you!!

Some last minute news:

Sometime in early April you are going to be receiving an email from me concerning the **Guardians and there is something in there that will interest several of you**, so stay tuned.

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The Forest Service plan to have a final decision on the EIS for our allotment in late February has been postponed for at least 6 weeks so I believe they are looking at mid April now.

One last bit of information before I sign off:
Did you know that by January 3rd 2011 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has 568 species listed on our threatened or endangered list. These 568 species are not even found on **American** soil. These species are from places like China, Mongolia, Krygyzstan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Palau, and of course Canada, and Mexico. Just ignore the fact that it's your tax dollars hard at work. The shocking part of this is once the species is listed as threatened or endangered, our government then has the power to buy land or water in foreign countries to help the said species. However the control of that money is then turned over to someone else in that country to make the decision on how to spend it in regards to that species. That's really helping the American worker!

