

July Beef Roundup Trip Report

Sunday July 26th:

We had 13 guests for the July Beef Roundup with many of them being repeat people. The repeats are hard to call anything but cowboys. When you have come several times you start to understand why things need to be done a certain way, or within a certain time frame. They are a lot of help provided they don't get lost. One of our many times repeat people has the nickname of Columbus. Yes, she earned that nickname on one of the trips and yes she did manage to solidify the name again during the week. But that's for later in the story. We did have a gentleman from Chile on this trip. He rode extremely well and it was fascinating to hear him talk about some of the riding they do in Chile. They don't often rope cattle in Chile, but when they do, it's entirely different than how we do it here. Since they don't use western saddles there of course is no saddle horn to dally around. They have a ring fastened to the end of their cinch and they tie the rope into that. He did say it does sometimes cause unbelievable wrecks. Anyway "For the rest of the story".

After introductions we headed to the corrals where Chris did the horsemanship clinic. He always does such a fantastic job and this time was no different. After the horsemanship we headed up country for a trail ride to give people a little bit of a taste as to what type of terrain and riding they would be encountering during the week. This always exhilarates them as you ride into the high country and they realize you are above timberline. When we topped out on top of one of the high ridges we stopped to let the horses catch their breath. We would be about 9500 feet here and the air is just a little thinner. Some of the guests were breathing rather hard themselves, I wasn't sure if it was the elevation or the very steep hill we had just come up. As we sat there looking west I could see a huge black cloud starting to build west of us in the Wagon Box. I decided we needed to push on and get off of that high ridge before the thunder and lightning arrived. I was a little concerned for one of our guests who had a bad experience with lightning twice in her life, consequently she was terrified of lightning. I didn't say anything to her but was hoping we would get into camp before it broke loose on us. We weren't so lucky. We did get off the high ridge back into the timber before we stopped and had everyone slicker up. As we started riding back towards camp the thunder and lightning rolled in and let loose. At that elevation you can feel the ground move under you when it claps right over the top of you. It's absolutely incredible!!! I felt so sorry for Loup as the thunder rocked and rolled. She bent over in her saddle and was as tight as fiddle. She was absolutely terrified. The thing is you really don't know what to do to help them, so we kept going. We did stay in the low areas and in the trees as much as possible. It did rain but never real hard and about the time we got into camp the storm was gone and over. We did see moose and elk on the trip back.

Monday July 27:

We awoke to crystal clear blue skies. With no pollution the skies at 9000 feet are unbelievable at the crack of dawn. It is always amazing because we had probably had over an inch of rain after we had gone to bed that night. The freshness in the air is

indescribable. We rode out of camp at 8:20am. We had a long day ahead of us as it is just a long way to the far end of the permit to start gathering cattle. There is a shortcut, but I would never want to take people on it their first day out. We gathered the Little Horn Parks and dropped the cattle above the woven wire fence and rode back to camp. We rode into camp at 7:00 that evening. People were tired, but they had every right to be. The amazing thing is we spent over 10 hours in the saddle that day and had only moved the herd about 3-4 miles. Gathering and moving a herd on the mountain is a major undertaking. The miles you travel in a day doesn't tell you anything about the type of day you had. I know some people would say that if you only moved the herd 3 or 4 miles then the whole experience must be a phony. Try telling that to anybody who has been on one of our trips. If we didn't have guests with us the only thing we would do different is that we would leave camp at a trot, go off the shortcut and save about 3 hours of riding. Since we had gotten the herd part way, we could afford to let people sleep in the next morning.

Tuesday July 28th:

I called the valley before we rode out of camp to see if we had any messages. Every thing was fine except for one little detail. The weather was calling for potential snow above 7,000 feet in the Big Horns for that night. We rode back to East Burn and gathered the cattle we had dropped from the previous day. We were supposed to meet the cooks for lunch at No 1 reservoir at 1:00pm. As we gathered the herd I looked at my watch and knew we were going to be late for lunch. There were lots of cattle that were going to need to be roped and doctored. There was a lot of lame cattle with footrot. My best guess is that we roped and doctored about a dozen animals. With the time it took to do this we were about an hour late for lunch. We trailed the herd down to the lunch spot and dropped the cattle on fresh grass as we got off our horses and ate our lunch. Now a cowboys biggest fear in life is always getting left afoot and having to walk back. This is always embarrassing to the cowboy and probably funny to the horse. Anyway all but 4 of the group tied their horses up while we ate lunch. The other 4 showed their soft spots and left their horses to graze. Horses are funny because one time they will just stand and eat, the next time they decide going home is the preferred option. A horse is always smart enough though to wait until you are seated and have your plate full. Before you get your plate filled you are standing their sort of watching your horse as they graze. The generally just graze a step or two at a time in the opposite direction which is always towards camp. I was watching all of this with great amusement because I could see what was coming. Since we did have horses tied I knew we could barter for someone to go get their horses. Almost simultaneously Johnny Walker and Flip decided to roll with saddles and all that seemed to be the go signal. As soon as they stood up 4 horses as one started walking back to camp. It was hilarious to watch 4 ladies drop their plates and run after their horses, and yes Columbus was one of those. I have noticed that a sense of urgency seems to make people faster than they normally are. To their credit they did catch the horses before we had to mount up and go after them. It really takes very little to amuse me!

Wednesday July 29th:

Since we had arrived back at camp so late the day before we let people sleep a little longer. We were most definitely blessed because there wasn't any of that damn white stuff on the ground when we awoke. It had poured from about 1-4am that morning but

everyone seemed to have slept dry so it really wasn't much of an issue. Since we let people sleep in that morning we got a later start out of camp. Since we had to ride clear to the far end of the allotment like we had two days previous we decided the group was seasoned enough to take the short cut. It's actually a pretty good trail just a little steep in a few places. There is enough gravel in it that it doesn't get slick even if it's wet. It can get a little icy and be nerve racking in the late fall though. I do always laugh because every time we take people off of this trail the group gets really quiet when you come upon a bad spot and then they chatter like a bunch of Monkeys once you get by it. The view off of this trail is absolutely spectacular. By taking this trail we were in behind the cattle earlier than we had been on Monday. We gathered about 80 head of cattle and kicked them up above the little green cabin in East Burn and dropped them with the idea of picking them up the next day. As we gathered cattle, one cow had a new baby that wouldn't come out from under a tree. The calf was probably less than a day old. Momma cow #9022 kept calling him but the calf wasn't budging, so Loup got off her horse and pushed the calf out from under the tree and then the calf took off wobbling down the trail following his mom. Since Loup was now the calf's god mother we called the calf Loup all summer.

Thursday July 30th:

We rode to the bottom of Dayton Gulch and headed to ride West Burn. Our neighbor Chuck Fuller had cattle over there on his allotment and we new we had few yearlings with his cow. With yearlings you want to catch them every chance you can. If you don't they just keep wandering and all of a sudden they are 20 miles off your allotment. Then getting them back starts to be a challenge. We worked 6 yearlings out of Chuck's cow herd and trailed them across to the green cabin where we started gathering the cattle we had dropped the day before. It is so normal on the mountain, we didn't find as many cattle today as we had dropped yesterday. Yearlings are like mice in a hay stack. As soon as you pick up the bale they are under, they scurry for cover under the next bale. It's about impossible to catch up with all of them. If you try to go to your destination all in one day, it will be well after dark before you finish. We held herd on the open face on the end of the Little Horn Rim where we doctored several animals. We had one yearling that needed doctoring but we couldn't catch. She was getting very high headed and wild. My fear was that she would finally decide she was done with this and go running blind off the steep face. Of course if she went how many others would also break and go with her? I didn't want to blow the whole day so I said lets go through the fence and we will try and catch her on the other side. We went through the gate and of course she wasn't going to let us slip up on her. Brendon charged up on her with Lakota and that was when everything went south. Another yearling cut out in front of Brendon just as he was getting ready to throw his rope. With Lakota going wide open and no front legs under her, Brendon, Lakota and the yearling all rolled into a big cloud of dust and flailing legs. The first thing out of the cloud of dust was the yearling and then the dust settled and we could tell neither Brendon or Lakota were okay. I was right behind Brendon when this happened and I remember praying please get your foot out of the stirrup. Brendon slowly got to his feet obviously putting weight on one leg only. Lakota struggled to her feet and was standing on three legs. The amazing thing about cowboys, his only concern was for his horse. I sent Taylor back to get the pickup and trailer and meet us at #1 reservoir. Brendon and Lakota hobbled the half mile to the road where we waited for the trailer.

They both were in a lot of discomfort. Brendon was absolutely crushed for what had happened to Lakota. A true cowboy is truly an amazing person. There is a cowboy ballad about a cowboy who freezes to death 500 yards from his house because he won't leave his horse who finally played out riding back in a bitter cold blizzard. The cowboy dies trying to get his horse back on his feet because he just won't leave him there. There is some truth to it. Once things sort of settled down I asked Brendon where he was hurt and he said he couldn't feel his toes. I suggested we touch the ends of them with an electric hot shot to see if that was true. The look I got wasn't one of approval. When we got back to camp, we headed to Bear Lodge for the banquet.

Friday July 31st:

After breakfast we backed the horse trailer into a ditch and Brendon headed to the valley to see the vet. We had a hard a hard time getting Lakota loaded as her shoulder was about twice as big around as it should be, she had very little movement in the shoulder. I hooked to the Porta Potties and headed to the valley behind Brendon. Trent took the group back to gather Bear Trap and push the leads back down country. Earlier in the story I mentioned Columbus, well today was the day. She did great all week and then the very last day, actually the last couple of hour's things went south for her. Truly, she should have been going North but ended up going South. Trent had sent people different directions to gather and then they were going to meet at a specific spot for lunch. He asked Columbus if she knew where they were to meet up and she assured him she did. Everyone was where they were supposed to meet except you guessed it, COLOMBUS EITRHEIM. I do believe she was looking for a passage to the West Indies. On her behalf after wandering around for I'm not really sure how long, she did show up at the appointed place and with some cattle she had found. They did get the job done and rode back to camp. I had returned from dropping off the porta potties and was waiting at camp when they arrived. As Columbus rode up the first words out of her mouth were- "Let me tell you my side of the story first". Actually Amy is a good cowboy and I am happy to have her with us anytime, as long as we can keep her on a long leash. We really do enjoy the laughs that come about during the week and they are never meant personally. The cow business is one tough son of a gun, and if we couldn't laugh there wouldn't be any reason to continue to do this. Anyway, Thanks everyone for the incredible week and I would love to have any of you back with us at any point in time. You are always welcome at our fire!