

Branding Iron



Corby Ward, Chief Brand Inspector *Bismarck*



Calving season is in full swing for most everybody, and we've had some up-and-down weather — 70 degrees one day and six inches of snow two days later. Those extreme changes are hard to deal with, but I suppose that's part of being in the game. Hopefully, everyone is having a good year so far.

Everyone has heard the saying, "Good fences make good neighbors." Generally, that holds pretty true, but there are always exceptions. I used to have a neighbor in Wyoming who was firm in his thoughts that he had no responsibility to maintain fences. A little back story: this neighbor was from Italy and ran a dude ranch for guests from Italy. He's a good guy, but just more into the image of ranching and cowboying than doing it.

Every year, he would lease his pasture out on a full-care deal and then his guests would get to play cowboy while they were there. That was perfectly fine, except that his hired hands only took care of the guests and nothing else. It worked out for me and a friend of mine, Wace, though, because every year the cattle on the dude ranch would end up scattered around the country due to the poor fences. The guests couldn't find them or get them gathered, so we would get hired to do it.

One year in late summer, after we had helped the guest ranch ship the cattle back to their owner, they were short four yearling heifers. The owner of the guest ranch told us that he would pay a \$250-per-head reward for each yearling we found.

A few mornings after we shipped, Wace and I were headed down the county road with horses in the trailer, going to help another neighbor, when we ran across two of the missing yearlings. In typical fashion, we figured we

could jump our horses out, rope and load the yearlings and be on our way.

We should have just kept driving because, as soon as we stopped, those yearlings threw their heads in the air and took off. Of course, instead, we tightened our cinches, mounted up and moved toward their direction. The pasture the yearlings were in had the Little Missouri River running through it. Along the river down there, the banks are steep and undercut and there's a lot of scrub oak and cottonwood trees along it.

It took us about 45 minutes to get the first one roped and tied down. By now, the second one was nowhere to be seen. We went back and got the trailer and loaded the yearling and decided to make another ride along the river to look for the remaining heifer.

I'm not sure if it was good or bad luck, but we found her and the chase was on again. After crashing through brush and crossing the river countless times, we were able to get her roped, led out to better ground and tied down. Once we got her loaded, we headed back down the road to go to the neighbors, a couple of hours later than planned at this point.

Driving along, happy with the fact we'd made an easy \$500 already, things went south. There was a loud bang and, instantly, we knew we'd blown a trailer tire. We pulled over to fix it and found that not only had we blown a tire, but there was a chunk of sagebrush sticking out of another tire. So, there we sat with two bad tires and one spare. My friend had left his cell phone at home, so I reached into my vest pocket and found that somewhere in our yearling-catching adventure, I had lost mine. Suddenly, our money-making morning had turned into a losing ordeal. But, I'd do it all over again to have the chance to chase yearlings again with Wace. 🐾

BRAND INSPECTORS

CHIEF BRAND INSPECTOR:

Corby Ward
(701) 595-2421

DEPUTY BRAND INSPECTOR:

Nick Marolt
(701) 595-6269

DEPUTY BRAND INSPECTOR:

Isaac Cadet
(701) 595-6521

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT SPECIALIST:

Corey Bergrud
(701) 595-6465

AUCTION MARKET BRAND OFFICES:

ABERDEEN, SD

Aberdeen Livestock Sales • (605) 225-2062
Hub City Livestock • (605) 225-3273

BOWMAN

Bowman Livestock Auction • (701) 523-5765

DEVILS LAKE

Lake Region Livestock • (701) 622-1045

DICKINSON

Stockmen's West • (701) 225-2819
Stockmen's Livestock Exchange • (701) 225-2819

HERREID, SD

Herreid Livestock Market • (605) 437-2265

JAMESTOWN

Jamestown Livestock Auction • (701) 252-5288

MANDAN

Kist Livestock Auction • (701) 663-8770

NAPOLEON

Napoleon Livestock Auction • (701) 754-2220

RUGBY

Rugby Livestock Sales • (701) 776-6019

SISSETON, SD

Sisseton Livestock • (605) 698-4343

WISHEK

Wishek Livestock Auction • (701) 452-2306

LOCAL BRAND INSPECTORS:

See the North Dakota Cattle Directory for a complete listing beginning on page 60 or visit www.ndstockmen.org.