

Load'em Up and Bring Those "Doggies" Home

By Kris Ringwall
Extension Beef Specialist
NDSU Extension Service



The fall of the year represents changing times. Colors change, the air becomes crisp and the growing season comes to a close. It is time to move on.

The grain harvest is an early indicator that the time to move from field to bin is here, but the real clincher is the movement of calves. Last week, the Dickinson Research Extension Center started bringing home the calves for weaning and sorting. In the end, cows go one way and calves the other.

This activity is motivated by good management principles, which are driven by survival. Soon the water will freeze and any day the color of white could shut things down. It is time to haul cows and calves.

The image of pickups and trailers moving up and down the highways becomes common. A few brief discussions are held to reminisce about the days when all the cattle were herded home, but those mainly are memories.

Granted, there are many cattle still herded, but time, labor and the simple availability of efficient transportation make the shift to hauling fairly easy. At 10 miles a day, herding cattle takes time. With many cattle today some 50 to 100 miles from the home ranch, herding cattle just isn't practical.

When hauling, one soon learns to appreciate the good roads in rural America.

The North Dakota Agricultural Statistics Service lists statistics indicative of how rural North Dakota is. With a population of 633,837, the most recent census numbers note that about 44 percent of the population still is considered rural. On average, there are 9.2 people per square mile with access to towns by using 106,609 miles of road. There are 30,619 farms in North Dakota with an average size of 1,283 acres. Of the 44,144,595 acres that make up North Dakota, 39,294,879 acres is used for farming.

That is what being rural is. The network of rural roads becomes crucial to the daily lifestyle of those who live and make their living in the country, especially as the calves are hauled.

Even with that backdrop of rural America, the old days are getting further and further from our thoughts, especially our younger side. The world today is different.

Think about all those youth who are at home, in school, at a university or just starting out in the work force. What is their world?

The majority of youth are not connected to a rural world. The remnants of being rural are disappearing quickly. Road maintenance and the patience of the county road grader are not witnessed by many. The dilemma of rural versus urban is very real.

The scenes are changing, at least from where we sit. The answers often are not apparent and not always welcomed. The scenic view of herding cattle certainly fits with the urban flare, but parking a herd of 300 cows and calves is not as easy today as it was, so we haul.

Rural versus town versus city versus metropolitan center creates some interesting lifestyle contrasts. The further one gets from original rural communities, people become more consumers than producers and more energy users than providers. The potential disconnect from the world around us and beyond is real.

As a result, if we are not careful, most of those around us like to look, but the feel and smell are best left somewhere else. Perhaps that is why the sights and sounds are better viewed on the big screen with the feel and smell of popcorn outweighing the nitty-gritty impacts of a real cattle drive.

In the meantime, load'em up, get those diesels started and bring those little "doggies" home.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>.

For more information, contact the NDBCIA Office, 1041 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601, or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.



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