

BeefTalk 491: Thank You to the Brown Coverall Brigade

The winter storm removed the largest hoop structure on Section 19 at the Dickinson Research Extension Center ranch.

There is always a good side to everything. Sometimes, knowing that life is good is sufficient.

Agriculture is a daily exchange with nature. Those involved in production agriculture know there are no short cuts. It takes a real hammer, nails and lumber to produce a real fence.

A cheap hammer and nails and yesterday's lumber special will make a pretty fence. However, it is a fence the wind may move to the neighbor's land and leave your cattle exposed and vulnerable. The same is true for all tools and supplies that literally hold an operation together.

The eating public seldom realizes that the 99-cent tool special has no place on a cold January day with 50-mile-per-hour wind and cattle that need care. Sometimes joy is hard to find hidden under snowbanks and ducking away from the cutting wind.

The other day there was a great relief and perhaps some joy as the crew noticed help gathering in the shed. The workload has been particularly difficult since the storm started. The cold and wind, compounded by no power, was particularly stressful.

The winter storm removed the largest hoop structure on Section 19 at the Dickinson Research Extension Center ranch. It was a structure utilized as a central point for equipment operations and storage for servicing the cattle on Section 19. The loss of the structure is serious.

Power was lost at the ranch headquarters from Friday morning until Sunday morning. Section 19 was without power at the time of this writing, as are many across the western terrain.

Rural producers were left without power as power poles snapped under the weight of the ice. The force of one snapped pole cascaded down the line of poles, causing pole after pole to snap.

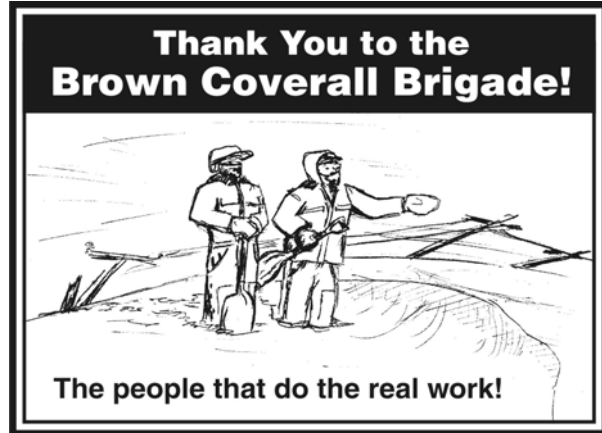
One could count the poles but, like the snow and wind, why? Even without power, the center was able to maintain feed and water. Groups of cattle have had to be moved and comingled to allow for care. However, no cattle or horses were lost during the winter storm.

The crew was happy until they realized the extra help were yesterday's brown coveralls, standing where they were left. There is something about brown coveralls, especially after several days of wear with no water to wash them. They do seem to take on a life of their own.

In the meantime, the crew returned to clearing the center of snow, with drifted snow accumulations in excess of several feet. Gaining access to the main buildings took hours and some buildings will remain inaccessible until the warmer days of spring.

Returning to the many neighbors without power, as with all storm events, much of the stress simply remains untold. Difficulty still remains and Mother Nature just does what Mother Nature does.

Smiling faces remain hard to find. We did find some smiley faces the other day. Those brown coveralls were all coming in for lunch and, lo and behold, by the time everyone got out of his or her brown coveralls, we realized another crew had comeingled with the center crew.



Well, all stayed for lunch, got resorted and went back out into the cold. In reality, all the brown coveralls have a name. However, it is quite difficult to distinguish a particular crew member because the application of several layers of clothing inserted into the brown coveralls tends to make identification difficult.

The other day, two brown coveralls were talking, but I was not quite sure they knew who they were talking to. Generally, some type of headgear is indicative of who is in the brown coveralls, but that is not a guarantee.

With the passing of time, most of Mother Nature's events are converted to stories that memories slowly smooth over. The roughest parts are dropped and replaced with a superhero or two.

Generally, the endings refocus on the good. Life is good, at least with a new pair of brown coveralls and good pliers.

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 Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601, or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.