



BT 599: It Is in Caring That We Will Survive



Producers that are successful in raising livestock in balance with their own lives understand when things are not right

Recently, one of the family dogs died. Bonsi, like many loyal family friends, had been with us for more than a decade. As a loyal guard dog that was part Komondor and part Newfoundland, she was very diligent.

It seems like yesterday when our boys brought home Bonsi and her sister Hondo. Bonsi is our loss, but the real story is Hondo.

Hondo kept faithful watch over Bonsi as she declined in health this past winter. Although there was no obvious discomfort, Hondo was faithful. As Bonsi entered her last week of life, in many respects, both dogs started to slow down. One was dying and the other was waiting.

Late one evening, as I ventured out to check on Bonsi, I was met by a very distraught Hondo. I did not need to go any further because I already knew Bonsi had died. It was Hondo who bore the news and still lays in remorse.

The standard dog treat will get Hondo to come to me, but not on the first call. She was not the dominant dog because she waited until Bonsi would indicate permission before she would proceed. However, both dogs did everything together in a very orderly fashion.

Most farms, ranches and homes have a dog. In fact, a dog's loyalty and duty to their home is commendable. Those long walks through the cattle pens are better with a loyal dog. Sleeping is sounder knowing the family dog has one ear tuned to anything out of the ordinary.

The growing up years of a dog is as complicated as raising children, but the mature years of unobstructed loyalty make up for the pile of dog chews.

Hondo reminds me that there is so much in this world we really do not understand. As the world around us changes, it is human nature to grab for whatever we can and fix whatever seems broken.

As we expand our influence and work to meet future demands, it is easy to forget that we are not in charge. In reality, so much that we strive for is lost in the abyss. What life really means is caring for those around us. In the process, we

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learn to share and give what we have.

The concept of sharing without giving is very flawed. The world will never produce all that it needs. We will never be able to resolve all the problems and we certainly will never feed the world.

What we can do is pay more attention to those around us, much like Hondo does. We need to take time. We need to take time so that we actually notice the world around us like Hondo does.

Producers that are successful in raising livestock in balance with their own lives simply understand when things are not right. We call that husbandry. Like Hondo, the feel of the herd is important. Daily feeding is not just feeding. It is a daily evaluation of what is happening to the herd. How are the cows doing? Is the herd right? Who did not come to eat and why? Why is number 38 bellowing?

We shouldn't need to find a dead calf to know that a calf has died. Even from a distance, we know things may not be right because we can sense it. That's important for those who understand raising beef cattle or any other livestock.

Hondo reminded me of that sense. There is the need for those who are trying to feed the world to never lose that sense. If we simply mass produce at a scale that does not allow for this sense to remain, then how will we know where we are going?

This is not to be critical of the increased efficiency and performance of livestock production. This increase in efficiency helps supply our neighbors with food. However, we can never feed the world. There will always come the day when the bins are empty and the supply exhausted. The reasons are not for us to know and certainly are not in our control.

What we can do is be more aware and cognizant of those around us. As people around us become more cognizant of the person next to them, we can flood the world with care. As a caring race, we simply come back to the story of Hondo.

Hondo could not change what was happening. However, she could and did care. Once the inevitable had happened, she set about doing the only thing she could, which was let the master know. Life will go on, but every day we need to be prepared to learn, to share and to care. And that is a product of the living. Thank you Hondo for teaching me again that we will never know everything, we can never fix everything, but we can care.

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.

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