

Welcome to Western Cattle Country



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Introduction by Dr. L. Mac Cropsey

This morning I feel we are very fortunate to have with us a man who is very well-known in cattle circles. I question whether there is anybody better known in the beef cattle world. Mr. Farr is president of the American National Cattlemen's Association, and he is their chief spokesman and also represents more than 150 affiliated state and county cattlemen's groups. He has been a member of their National Association since 1930, and started in the cattle business with his father in 1929. Today he operates, along with his sons, a 30,000-head feedlot in addition to his many other duties. He is on the National Cattle Industry Advisory Committee, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce for Agriculture, the National Livestock Tax Committee, and he is first chairman of the American National Cattlemen's Association's Feeder Committee. He graduated from Iowa State University. It gives me great pleasure to introduce Mr. Bill Farr. (Applause)

Thank you, Dr. Cropsey. Gentlemen, it is my pleasure to be here this morning and have the opportunity of talking to Bovine Practitioners. I kind of like that name. It has not been many years since you have separated veterinarians into "breeds" of this kind, and being interested specifically, or particularly, I should say, in the cattle business—I like that.

The title that they gave me on this program is "Welcome to Western Cattle Country," and I think that is an appropriate title for here, in Denver. This is the crossroads of the cattle industry in many ways. Those of you who took tours yesterday, I am sure, realize how versatile this is as you went to Greeley, Fort Collins, and Louisville, where you saw lots of different types of country. You saw that it was a large cattle-feeding area, and you saw some cattle-raising. Of course, you saw very little of the cattle-ranching part of this state or these western states. You did see one of the fine dairy herds. This is one of the second or third fastest growing states in the nation, and we do have ever-increasing dairy herds.

You might be interested to know that the first Cattlemen's Association in the nation was founded here in Colorado. The Colorado Cattlemen's Association is the oldest state cattle organization—105 years old. So, again, this is a crossroad, and in addition, the American National Cattlemen's Association, of which I am privileged to be president, is celebrating its 75th Diamond Anniversary here next month. The organization had its first convention here 75 years ago. The National Western Stock Show that you are all familiar with is one of the largest stock shows in the United States, and it started back in 1906. So, it's been here a long time!

As Dr. Cropsey said, we actually started feeding cattle a long time ago. Cattle feeding started in Colorado with the advent of the sugar factory, when sugarbeets were first grown. This industry started in Colorado. The first mills in the country were built in Greeley and the other towns in that area. My grandfather started feeding wet beet pulp to old ewes and old cows, then eventually switched more to lambs. We fed beet pulp to cattle, then along about 1930 Mr. Monfort, ourselves, and a few other people decided we could feed cattle on a year around basis rather than just in the fall of the year, and sell them in the spring. As we did this, we started to use animals that were a little bit younger. In those days, when an animal didn't weigh a thousand pounds, it was hardly worth entering the feedlot as they were too small, and we didn't have any veterinarians to take care of the cattle! The veterinarians basically looked after the work horses. They did not know very much about cattle. They didn't have any tools to work with. Here in Colorado, our state veterinarian, Dr. Bill Tobin's father, was the first veterinarian in Northern Colorado that really made an attempt to start the study of feedlot problems. Then Dr. Don Mackey, who writes for several magazines, and I am sure that you all know him, was literally the first practitioner to graduate from CSU to specifically make a career out of cattle-feeding. He took care of several feedlots in the area, starting by taking care of the Monfort cattle, our cattle, and others. He built a fine feedlot practice. He is the man that originally trained Dr. Duane Flack, whom you met yesterday at the Monfort operation, and who is now in charge of all their cattle-feeding operation.

The business has changed a lot since those years. You gentlemen have developed into sophisticated practitioners. You have equipment; you know the animal problems. You have helped build what is really a tremendous cattle industry. Many people do not appreciate what the cattle industry is in the United States. Maybe you do not realize that it is the largest agricultural business in existence. Almost a fourth of the total agricultural income of the United States depends upon cattle and calves. That's one reason why we get some attention in Congress, and that we are able to accomplish things.

Our beef consumption has doubled in the last twenty years because of the cattle feedlots. Today, all cattle basically are fed-cattle. This year we will slaughter almost 30 million cattle that have been through feedlots in 1971. Here in Colorado, for example, two-thirds of the agricultural income of the State of Colorado comes from cattle, in spite of the fact that we have a vast acreage of dry land, wheat and the great sugar beet industry.

If you go to Greeley and our Weld County, which is in the top ten in the nation, and has been for a long time, 80% of our agricultural income (in Weld County) comes from cattle. We now have more cattle feedlots than we have cattle to put into them, which is one of the reasons that the cattle business has changed. Since we have more feedlots, then every feeder animal is quickly moved into a feedlot. They are constantly younger and younger as they move into a feedlot to be finished for slaughter, which levels the supply. This takes the high and low spots off the market—as some of you older men may remember—and it has turned into a very stable business. At one time the cattle market was thought to be a highly speculative business.

The American National Cattle Association has developed tremendously through these 75 years. It started as a range cattle industry, since it was founded by

the range men. The original problems were transportation difficulties, public lands, creditors, and all types of problems with cattle rustling and brands. These were the early problems and to a point they still exist. Today, American National consists of the range people, the feeder organizations, the breed associations, and spokesmen for the beef cattle industry. We work with the dairy people to some extent, but we speak of ourselves as the "spokesmen" of the cattle industry.

Our national headquarters' office is located here in Denver. If any of you, while you are here, would care to visit our office, we'd be glad to have you. The address is 1540 Emerson Street. The man in charge of this office is George Spencer, who was with Swift and Company for many years. Some of you might have met him during those years. We also have another office building east of here at 17th and Clarkson, where we operate our Cattle Facts Market Information System. I am sure that many of you are familiar with this as a system where we collect information on 40% of all of the cattle on feed. The cattle feeding states report monthly on cattle numbers to this organization. It is owned and operated by them with the purpose of improving their knowledge and information of the cattle business. All of the larger feedlots are in daily touch by telephone to give the information on their purchases, sales, weights of the cattle, the prices that are being paid and asked, and how the cattle are moving. This information comes into Denver on a daily basis, goes into the computer, and in the afternoons the totals are available. We know exactly what is happening in every state of the country. This all goes on "the wire" back to the people with teletype. If they are smaller feeders, the information will go by mail. We operate regional offices in Boise, Idaho; Des Moines, Iowa; and Sacramento, California. So, these cattle members are tremendously informed, with better information than anybody ever had before in cattle business history. They know constantly what is going on. If there is any question in their mind about the price that somebody is offering for their cattle, they know whether they should take it, or whether they should not; whether the market might be a little better next week; and all they have to do is call their nearest Cattle Facts office and we can advise them. It is just pure basic information. There is nobody that has an axe to grind; nobody has money invested; it isn't a banker that wants to collect the loan; it isn't a feed company that wants to sell more feed, or a commission man that wants to collect commissions! We have two agricultural economists on this staff who constantly analyze the data. We are sure that this is one of the factors that has raised the cattle market and holds it at a constant level, particularly for the past year.

We also have a Washington office. Bill McMillan, who was here in Denver for many years, runs that office. ANCA has this office in the National Press Building. If any of you happen to be in Washington, D.C., Bill is a full-time registered lobbyist. He's working on problems that are good for the cattle industry constantly. We find this very, very effective. We also find that we have more problems in Washington constantly!

I think perhaps your relatively new organization should cooperate with our organization. Since we have problems of mutual concern, very possibly your officers should be in touch with our Denver office. We work closely with the Animal Health Institute and with all of the major drug companies which have their people in Washington. We work with the Pure Food and Drug Administration all

the time. Whenever I go to Washington as president of ANCA, I have to personally know all the people in the Department of Agriculture, from the Secretary on down through the various departments. We have a lot of political help when we put it together because we are a commodity group.

Our only interest is cattle or beef. We are not trying to “carry water on all shoulders” like some of the big farm organizations, where they cannot possibly please everyone. We are only interested in beef, and in that context we are effective. We have cattle in all fifty states, as you gentlemen well know, and people eat beef in all fifty states. There is no other commodity that is in that position. Consumers eat more beef—almost twice as much beef as they eat pork and three times as much as they eat poultry. They spend more money for beef than they spend for any other single food item. Consequently, we can get a lot of support in Congress for something that has to do with beef, provided it is a solid position.

We have problems, of course, like diethylstilbestrol (DES), that you are all familiar with. It has been in the press a lot lately. We have defended the position of DES and we want to preserve it for the cattle industry. We’ve had some suggestions: “Why don’t you quit feeding it or perhaps just use implants and quit arguing about it?” That is an easy way out, but the people that are for eliminating it are not after just DES; they are after DES first, antibiotics next, and then other things!

There are many areas where we might work together; for example, recently the USDA proposed some rules and regulations on the interstate movement of bovine semen. We circulated this to all of our area state groups and asked for their comments, which is our customary practice, and the members’ reactions in many states said, “Fine.” We had excellent suggestions and ideas on how to improve the regulations from certain states. We forwarded these to the Agricultural Research Service, and I am sure that some of you people probably did the same thing. If we had been cooperating carefully, we would have had better ideas on this, and we might have been able to put them together with our ideas, and then let our men in Washington follow them through.

Another mutual interest point, which you may not all be familiar with, is that for years and years we have talked about getting an island somewhere in the Atlantic. We could start to import cattle directly into the United States instead of through Canada or Mexico. We have worked on this for years and in the last two weeks the decision has finally been made. An island in the Florida Keys will be the location for this new import station. Of course, it will take awhile to get the money and get the facility built at the harbor where the cattle can come in and be held in quarantine for several months before entry onto the United States mainland. This is again an area of common interest.

You veterinarians do represent a great profession and one that is very necessary to us. You are doing a tremendous job keeping cattle herds healthy. We believe, from the studies made, that we can double the cattle population in the United States in the next several years. There is evidence that we need to increase beef production by 30% in the late 80’s. We have “a whale of a job” ahead of us to keep enough beef supply to satisfy our people.

Perhaps the veterinarians in the cattle areas could become involved as associate members of ANCA. We have this privilege for people who are not cattle producers but are interested. We have a large national associate membership that

the large drug companies support. Many of you people, I think, could logically be members of ANCA and support some of the cattle activities.

We have a weekly service, like a Kiplinger letter. We call it Beef Business Bulletin. If you don't have time to read much, you could read these two sheets once a week and you would basically know all that is new in the cattle business in this country each week. We are improving this newsletter. For example, it is always on your desk on Monday morning with last week's important happenings. The newsletter yesterday said that finally, as the Congress adjourned, they approved the new tax bill and sent it to the President for signature. ANCA helped to include in this bill, for the first time, for the cattle industry, the 7% investment credit tax advantage that all other industries have had. If any of your clients are buying cows and adding to their herds, they can now purchase these animals and use investment credit to the same advantage as if they were a new industry building a new factory or buying a lot of new equipment. This is a new permanent addition and also has the involuntary conversion, which is important to the cattle owner. Sometimes we have to liquidate herds because of drought or disease problems. If this happens, you may come back and buy them back two or three years later and you can now take the investment tax credit on replacing the whole herd. So there are many things that ANCA can do for the cattle industry constantly, which are helpful.

We know there are many unaccomplished tasks ahead, but I appreciate the opportunity of talking to you about the cattle industry and telling you a little bit about the American National Cattlemen's Association. Let me compliment you on this kind of attendance and thank you for the help that you are giving the cattle industry. (Applause)

DR. CROPSEY: Thank you very much, Bill Farr. He is, indeed, a great advocate for the betterment of the cattle industry and has spent a good portion of his life trying to help this huge industry. I know that he and ANCA have been helping veterinarians in our fight to keep the drugs that we now use on the future availability list.

Response

DR. E. W. TUCKER

*1970 President, American Veterinary Medical Association
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Ladies and gentlemen, I am here as the official representative of the AVMA, and of course, I bring greetings from that parent association to all of you here who are currently enjoying, I believe, the most successful meeting so far.

As listed in the program, I am supposed to deliver a response to Mr. Farr's address. I must, of course, recognize the tremendous changes that have come about in cattle, beef and dairy, the whole bovine industry, over many years. I think that all of us appreciate the great transformation that has occurred, especially since World War II. It seems to me that there has been an absolute revolution in the type of work that we all do.

I thought that in my remarks I might stimulate some of you to go back to the past rather than what we all see at the moment, to try to make you realize some of the things that have developed in the last 350 years in the United States. I will not go into great detail, but I will tell you I had planned to talk about the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, in 1620, and how they were befriended by Squanto, the Indian, who counted out the grains of corn that they had and rationed each of the humans (the group of ninety or so that there were) to five kernels of corn per day. That's what these folks had in 1620! Then, through the assistance of the Indians, there were a total of 45 Pilgrims who survived that first winter. They did have some good harvests even though they had no cattle. They did have a grain harvest and utilized one thing or another. They had a Thanksgiving in 1621. At that time it was a real great event. The foodstuffs that were provided were those provided by nature herself: the birds, deer, fish, lobster, clams, and anything they could get. From this beginning—the first real colonization, and what we now consider to be the United States—there were inland settlements of which the town where I reside was the first. It was settled in 1630, incorporated in 1636, and from that little agricultural town, which was principally dairy, too, there emanated other pioneers who went West to New York State and down through Pennsylvania, Ohio, finally got across the Mississippi, and look what we have out here in the West today! The transformation has been tremendous! Originally, Boston had its famous “Boston Common” where the cattle were pastured. The streets, are still rather tortuous and narrow. They were developed from cow paths that were made by these animals as they went along! Too many of us do not appreciate the privations, the difficulties, and the exigencies that the original colonists had to survive. The family farm was their way of living. Now it is almost completely gone. The dollar is what counts! It is no longer the self-sufficiency of the farm or the family, but rather it is the commercialism, and perhaps the “almighty dollar” that we should consider. We are now programming our activities, which is for the better nutrition of all.

I think that unless we get on the ball and do work with our colleges, with the National Cattlemen's Association, and all other groups, that we as veterinarians may well lose this opportunity to further help the beef and cattle industry and understand the economics of the situation. There are some of us who are too poorly educated to realize the difference a penny or a quarter of a cent a pound can make on the total operation of a farm. Therefore, I think that a meeting such as this where we not only increase our technical knowledge, but where items of economic importance are drilled into us, or at least put out for us to digest, are of extreme importance. That is why I am so happy to see so many of us here to spend our time and try to learn.

I think one of the big reasons why we have this integration of dairy and feedlot operations now is because we have used our heads and our knowledge in order to aid in disease control. This is strictly a veterinary and professional situation. We have through our abilities thwarted diseases that existed on this continent, and we have tried very hard to keep exotic or foreign diseases out. I am very happy to hear that the quarantine station site has now been selected, and I hope that it will be implemented and used very shortly. You all know that the AVMA has been pushing for this a long, long time, and I do feel that we should work more closely, Mr. Farr, with your Washington representatives. We, in the

American Veterinary Medical Association, have excellent representation in Washington, too. I think that at times the liaison has perhaps not been what it should be, but we will try to improve in the future for the benefit of all of us. I do think that, provided we and those who will follow us continue our desire for greater knowledge, the future is bright for the Bovine Practitioners, the Feedlot, the Dairy Operators. We always must pay attention to the housewife. She is the one who says, "Yes, beef should have fat on it," or, "We will have dairy cow's milk and not synthetic products." These are factors coming up with ever-increasing frequency that we must be wise to, as far as our operations are concerned. Then, too, I think that the incorporation of the veterinary technician or animal technician, or whatever you want to call him, would be of great help to those of us in large animal practice, provided that we properly educate, train and control these individuals. I don't see why I have to have eight years of college training in order to trim a cow's foot! Actually, I just don't understand this. I think that someone with somewhat lesser expertise and training could do this work every bit as well, if not better. Therefore, I think that it would behoove those of you who have an adverse attitude toward the use of technicians to stop, sit down and review your situation and utilize your talents perhaps at a higher level than trimming feet or some of the other menial chores.

With that I will conclude by wishing you the very best of success and luck and the ability to retain what you are exposed to here today for the benefits of the feed and dairy cattle industry and all the mouths that have to be fed throughout the world. Thank you very much. (Applause)