

# I KNOW THE CATTLE

## A Poem for Joyce

This poem is written for Joyce, our former Resources Clerk, who once sent a message to all Forest range personnel pleading for help, as she could not distinguish the bulls, cows, yearlings, and horses in her data base...

I think that I shall never pass  
Along a stretch of open grass,  
That my eye won't find delight  
When cattle graze within my sight.  
For "cattle" as a kind of stock  
I've learned to know without a block:  
Bull, cow, calf, yearling, heifer, steer,  
The cattle classes all are clear,  
And when I look, I know I can  
Describe the "cow" that's on the land.

The bull, he is a brutesome beast;  
For humankind he cares the least.  
Among the cows, one month a year,  
He falters not, his duty clear.  
He glares at all with beady eyes,  
His back a swarm of biting flies.  
I'll not mistake his ponderous gait,  
Or think that he's too overweight,  
When in a bull field I must pace,  
I'm watching him, prepared to race.

The cow, she's "mom" must udderly.  
Her belly's broad and motherly,  
Her big, brown eyes have lashes thick-  
The envy of many a human "chick."  
Unlike the bull, who'll grunt and bellow,  
A cow says "moo" with manner mellow,  
Unless she's desperate, her calf astray,  
Her composure all in disarray.  
At times like that I know to try  
To keep my distance, slightly shy.

A cow that has not borne a calf yet  
We call a "heifer" in cattle etiquette.  
A heifer's daintier than a cow,  
Her tail is short, she's less a "frau,"  
Her belly's trim, her udder light,  
Her cares are few - she's more a sprite.  
A heifer's not a creature mean,  
She's just a cow that's still a teen.

A steer is what a cowboy calls  
A cattle male that's minus balls.  
He's usually of a heifer nature,

But heavier built, of beefy stature.  
Steer calves, heifer calves to 6 months old,  
They're what the cow-calf rancher sold.  
From 6 to 18 months they're known  
As yearling cattle, on their own.

Now yearlings are a curious group,  
They tend to cluster as a troop,  
Investigating things "en masse,"  
Or scattering wildly through the grass.  
The baby calves are a special treat,  
They're cute and clean and soft and sweet.  
I really like their wide-eyed stare,  
And their frisking in fresh spring air.

I know the cattle, from bull to calf-  
The classes all I've memorized,  
But what concerns me still by half,  
Is how a horse is recognized!

by Katie Bump