

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