
Animal Agriculture
Cowboys and Husbandry

During the early 1980s, although I was mostly too busy to think about anything besides learning biomedicine and veterinary medicine and articulating animal ethics, I still made time for self-doubt, the plague that God forgot to afflict the Egyptians with but left for the Jews. In particular, I worried about not doing “real philosophy,” about not plowing the same ground as my peers, about not aspiring to leave CSU and get back to the East. This was not helped when I received a visit from one of my friends from graduate school, who said, “You have too good a mind to waste on animals and veterinarians.” “What *should* I do?” I asked. “You should be scouring the philosophy journal for hot topics and saying something no one has said about those issues.” “Whether I believe them or not?” I queried. “What does that have to do with it?” he retorted. “What counts is having your name on the right lips,” he continued. “Sophia Loren’s?” I joked. “No, no,” he said and proceeded to name half a dozen trendy philosophers. The neurotic anxiety this engendered was quickly extinguished by a phone call to Arthur Danto, who assured me of the value of what I was doing.

Unquestionably, my life was changing. I was reasonably fit and strong. I was learning new fields and tapping unexplored issues. My wife had decided that, since she had almost flunked calculus as a college freshman, she would compensate by earning a doctorate in math at CSU in combinatorics and coding theory. She finished and never opened a math book again, proving for eternity that (1) she is far cooler than I am and (2) she is far brighter.

I have never encountered anything intellectual she couldn't master—and cogently criticize—in a flash.

In 1979, the greatest event of my life occurred when, on July 4, my son, Michael David Hume Rollin, was born. Fatherhood scared the hell out of me. My own father had walked out when I was five and my brother was one, leaving my mother and maternal grandmother to raise me at a time when coming from a “broken home” was shameful. All of my friends had fathers at home. The last time I saw my father was when I was nineteen; he showed up in Coney Island and asked whether I knew a kid named Bernie Rollin. Stung that he didn't recognize me, I said, “I think he works at the other end of the Boardwalk.” I never saw him again.

I didn't have a model for being a father; for that matter, I had no clear model for being a man. One of my friends since the fifth grade recently remarked that I had drawn my model from western movies—clear-cut ethics: a willingness to fight for what is right without fear or, at least, without being paralyzed by fear. After a while, it dawned on me that I did have a model for being a father. I simply needed to attend to what I felt had been missing when I was a child: someone to teach me sports, to ride a bike, to protect me and make me feel secure, to teach me “guy stuff.” By the same token, I knew what I hadn't missed: someone big to yell at me and punish me, someone to fear. I followed that notion, and my son and I became as close as any father and son can be while he grew up independent, competent, strong, and self-sufficient—like his father, a weightlifter and motorcyclist and, in addition, a black belt in karate, a musician, and a physician. He is a child psychiatrist driven by concern for the weak.

One of my early photos shows me on an Enduro all-terrain motorcycle with Mikey, age one, hung around my neck in a backpack. At four, he had a 50cc motorcycle with special training wheels attached. Since he was eight until the present, we have taken a one- to two-week motorcycle trip together every summer, all over the U.S. West. He rode on the back of my motorcycle until he was eighteen; after that, he had his own bike. From 1990 on, we made the trips on a Harley-Davidson, a wonderful key to entering new subcultures, including that of cowboys *and* Indians.

On one of our first trips, we went to the Navajo reservation in Arizona. I was stopped by a Navajo motorcycle patrolman; as it happened, he was the chief of police and was also riding a Harley. He politely told us that since the reservation was federally administered (though an independent nation), the law required riders to wear helmets. Though Mike wore one, I did not.¹

¹The interested reader should see “It's My Own Damn Head” (Rollin 2006b). The essay describes my objections to helmets.

As Mikey's face fell, thinking we had to leave the reservation, the chief smiled and said, "Notice *I'm* not wearing one. Have a good day!" In the twenty-plus years we have ridden together, even when Mike was a student at Stanford University and at the University of Colorado's medical school, we have had many adventures, most predictably from the Harley breaking down and our thereby meeting wonderful people. When applying to colleges, Mikey wrote his application essay about these trips. Interviewers never failed to focus on this (everyone is a biker at heart) and, indeed, he was accepted to every college to which he applied, including Harvard and Princeton.

One of our adventures took place on what is known as the loneliest road in the United States, a barren 100-mile stretch from Colorado to the Utah–Nevada border. We stayed at a motel. The next morning, when I pushed the Harley's starter button, nothing happened. Mikey was eleven or so and needed to push the 600-pound bike, the 250-pound father, and 50 pounds of luggage to a start repeatedly as we rode over 350 miles to a bike shop amid shouts of "Shame!" and "Child abuse!"

Mikey is one of the brightest people I know. I took him with me everywhere: to my classes, on trips to lectures, even to department meetings. After one two-hour meeting, when he was about seven, he approached the department head. "Dick," he said, "wasn't the question that needed deciding A or B?" "Right," said Dick. "And wasn't A impossible?" he asked. "Right again," Dick said. "Then why did it take two hours for them to choose B?" When he was five, he asked me what philosophy is. I said that philosophers worry about questions such as "What is the number 1?" He wrinkled his brow and said, "It is something that is not something else," thereby articulating the Russell–Whitehead–Frege view and leaving me speechless. He was not only smart; he was smart enough to know when to keep quiet. While I was working on my book on animal consciousness, I asked him whether the dog thinks. "Sure," he said. "Well," I asked, "since she doesn't have language, she can't think in words, so *how* does she think?" "How should I know?" he replied.

Needless to say, he grew up sharing my concern for animals. Mikey almost never cried—even when he broke his arm while learning to ride a bicycle. Yet one day when he was little, as we drove to Cheyenne, Wyoming, I saw tears silently roll down his cheeks. "What's the matter, honey?" I asked. He pointed to a bilevel cattle truck and said, "Those animals are hot and scared and pooping on each other. That's not right." The image of his tears stayed with me and fueled my work in agriculture.

That I got involved with animals used in research and teaching is not all that surprising. I team-taught biology. I studied science. I understood research. Totally amazing was my increasing involvement in agriculture, to the point that I have been listed in one scholarly directory as an "animal sci-

entist.” When I got to Colorado, I didn’t know hay from straw or foals from ponies, and when my wife asked me why farmers plow at night, I replied, “Because it’s cooler.” I was unaware that only by working in the daytime at city jobs could they keep the farm going.

This involvement was unplanned. Like my involvement in the veterinary program, my connection with agriculture just happened. It initially occurred because so many of my veterinary students were cowboys who also were involved with rodeo. In fact, CSU had an annual vet school rodeo. This was a perfect issue to engage these students. As the rodeo approached, I “casually” mentioned that a future veterinarian’s engaging in rodeo was roughly equivalent to “orthopedic surgeons picking fights in bars.” This riled the cowboys. “What do you mean?” they wanted to know. “Well you’re supposed to be curing animals, not hurting them,” I replied. “Look at calf-roping for God’s sake. You are jerking a baby animal to a stop at twenty miles an hour.”

The next week, they came in and asked to continue the discussion. “Would it satisfy you if we made some changes?” they asked. “Whoa,” I said. “You don’t need to satisfy *me*. You need to satisfy yourselves.” “OK, OK,” they said. “What if we modify calf roping?” “How?” I asked. “What if we use breakaway ropes?” “What does that mean?” I asked. “Rope attached to strings so that we can rope the calf, but the string breaks when they pull it.” “Sounds reasonable,” I said. I did not fully grasp the significance of the idea until a cowgirl took me aside after class. “You don’t understand what they’ve done,” she said. “In our culture, breakaway ropes are used only in women’s events.” There began my love and respect for cowboys and ranch people. I would witness that honesty and integrity myriad times over the next thirty years.

A similar event took place a few years later when I was invited to address the CSU Rodeo Club about the new ethic for animals in relation to rodeo. When I entered the room, I found some two dozen cowboys seated as far back as possible, cowboy hats tilted down over their eyes, booted feet up on chairs, arms folded defiantly, and arrogantly smirking at me. With the quick-wittedness for which I am known, I immediately sized up the situation as a hostile one. “Why am I here?” I began by asking. No response. I repeated the question: “Seriously, why am I here? You ought to know—you invited me.” One brave soul ventured, “You’re here to tell us what’s wrong with rodeo.” “Would you listen?” I asked. “Hell, no,” they chorused. “Well, in that case, I would be stupid to try,” I said, “and I’m not stupid.” A long silence followed. Finally someone suggested, “Are you here to help us think about rodeo?” I asked them whether that was what they wanted. “Yes,” they said. “OK,” I replied. “I can do that.”

For the next hour, without mentioning rodeo, I discussed many aspects

of ethics: the nature of social morality and individual morality, the relationship between law and ethics, the need for an ethic for how we treat animals. I asked them about their position on that last question. After some dialogue, they all agreed that, as a minimal ethical principle, one should not hurt animals for trivial reasons. "OK," I said, "in the face of our discussion, take a fifteen-minute break, go out in the hall, talk among yourselves, and come back and tell me what *you guys* think is wrong with rodeo from the point of view of animal ethics."

Fifteen minutes later they came back. All took seats in the front, not the back. One man, the president of the club, stood nervously in front of the room, hat in hand. "Well," I said, not knowing what to expect or what the change in attitude betokened, "what did you guys agree is wrong with rodeo?" The president looked at me and quietly spoke: "Everything." "Beg your pardon?" I said. "Everything," he repeated. "When we started to think about it, we realized that what we do violates our own ethics about animals." "OK," I said. "I've done my job. I can go." "Please don't go," he said. "We want to think this through. Rodeo means a lot to us. Will you help us think through how we can hold on to rodeo and yet not violate our ethic?" To me, the incident represents an archetypal example of successful ethical dialogue, using recollection and, again, judo not sumo.

In any event, the students went home and told their families and friends about what I was teaching. One student, who was from a powerful ranching family, insisted that I be invited to the animal convention of the Colorado Cattlemen's Association. He was persistent, and I got a call from the group. "You're invited at your own expense," they said. "You'll have ten minutes to speak." I was angry. "You're responding to pressure," I said. "You don't really want me, so I'm not coming. When you really want me, you will damn well pay my way and give me a reasonable amount of time."

By 1980, the vet course was garnering much attention, even being written up in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. I began to know some of the animal-science faculty, mostly ranch people. One of them, Ed Pexton, now deceased, asked me whether I could teach a course that would help animal-science students understand emerging animal ethics and philosophy, as well as develop their reasoning ability and speaking and writing skills. I had already done some guest lectures for the faculty and very much enjoyed the students, who in turn were very interested. I agreed and taught the course for the first time in 1982. As I expected, I loved the students—at that time, mostly ranch kids. They were honest, straightforward, and open to new ideas and, at the same time, articulate in defense of their way of life. I have never had a bad group among those students. They are timeless in attitudes and values.

Two students stand out from that group. One was Mark Haake, who came from a dairy farm near Denver. He was an active class participant and an A student. At the end of the term, fifteen-page term papers were due. As the students passed the papers up to me, I noticed that one was in a binder and was as thick as a small-town phonebook—master’s thesis length. “Whose is this?” I asked. Mark raised his hand. “This was supposed to be fifteen pages,” I said. “If I was gonna do it, I was gonna do it right,” he replied. He and I have stayed friends, and I have been out to his farm on numerous occasions.

One Sunday afternoon, I received a call from Mark. He was upset. “A lady from Denver just knocked on my door and is screaming at me,” he said. “She saw my calf hutches [igloo-like houses that dairy calves are kept in to avoid spreading disease]. She’s yelling and crying that she won’t let them be raised for veal.” (At that time, veal calves were raised in tiny crates in which the animals were confined and kept anemic and immobile so their meat would be pale and tender.) “She says she’s going to bring [television] reporters down to film this ‘atrociousness,’” he continued. “Question for you is: Should I try to educate her or kill her?” “Killing her will probably mess up your summer plans.” I said. “Try to teach her.” Three hours later, he called back and said proudly, “Well, I explained the hutches to her. She’s still yellin’ about bringing the TV people. Only now she wants everyone to see how well we care for our calves. She’s bringing a whole bunch of school kids.”

About ten years later, in the early 1990s, CSU’s veterinary student demographic had diminished from 85–90 percent cowboys and cowgirls to about 20 percent. (Now fewer than 5 percent are cowboys and cowgirls, which is a real shame.) One of the worst urban students was a woman who had a degree from Wesleyan University, the Vatican for political correctness. She berated the cowboys for “raising flesh” and me for not being politically correct. “If you were at Wesleyan and said some of the things you say,” she told me obnoxiously, “we students would hold a candlelight vigil at your house.” I asked her whether the vigil would be held during the day or at night. “Night—why?” she asked. “Because candles are great targets at night,” I said. In any event, she kept harassing the most archetypal cowboy in the class about the incongruity between being a vet and “raising flesh.” Before Thanksgiving, he came to see me. “Doc, I got two choices with that woman,” he said. “I either bring her home for Thanksgiving and show her how we care for animals or I’ll kill her. I’ll try bringing her home first.” After Thanksgiving, she was still an opinionated motor mouth, but her opinions had done a 180 degree turn. She incessantly talked about the excellent care ranchers provide for their livestock.

In 1982, I started teaching the world’s first Ethics of Animal Agriculture

course for CSU's Department of Animal Sciences. Once again, as in veterinary medicine, a few liberal intellectuals in the department saw the need for such a class. Today, I hold an appointment in animal sciences and work as closely with that department as with veterinary medicine. One of my students in that class was Melissa Miller, a member of a prominent agricultural family in Colorado who was both highly knowledgeable and highly analytical. At the end of the first week of class, she asked to see me in my office. As soon as she sat down, she burst into tears. "I can't do it," she cried. "I just can't do it." "What?" I asked. "I just can't spy on you." Spy on me? It turned out that her master's adviser had asked her to sit in on my class and report back if I was teaching vegetarianism. I couldn't help laughing. "Why spy on me? I offered the faculty the chance to team-teach the class." "Yes," she said, "but they fear your intellect and that you will mop up the floor with them if they try to argue with you." "In that case," I said, "keep reporting to them. Maybe they'll learn something."

I had my revenge shortly thereafter. A new hire in the Department of Animal Sciences was John Edwards, a beef specialist and livestock judging coach—the best in the United States—who was about my age. He taught the introductory animal science class with three hundred or so students and asked me to lecture on animal ethics. We did not meet until I arrived in his classroom for the lecture. He chatted a while and introduced me. I was still annoyed about the Melissa incident, so I began my lecture by saying, "As near as I can tell, the faculty in this department are a bunch of ignorant shit kickers, and this guy is no exception." I thought Edwards would burst; then he started to laugh. At the end of the two-hour class, he invited me for a beer, still laughing. We have been close friends ever since and have stayed in each other's homes after he was hired away by Texas A&M and, later, became president of the Limousin Association (for cows, not cars).

Melissa Miller and I also stayed friends. After she graduated, she became the first female beef extension specialist in Colorado's history. She was posted in Kiowa, a High Plains town midway between Denver and Colorado Springs. One day in 1982, Melissa called to invite me to address the Stockman's Seminar in Kiowa on animal ethics. At that time, I had never spoken to ranchers, just to their kids, and I was still smarting from the obnoxious invitation from the Colorado Cattlemen described earlier. "Are *they* inviting me?" I asked. "Or are *you* inviting me?" "Same thing," she said. I was shortly to find out that there was a major difference. A date was set in the spring. Melissa told me that I was to speak in the high-school cafeteria and to ask anyone for directions to the high school when I got to Kiowa, since there were no addresses. I agreed. On the appointed day, I put on my tie and blazer and drove to Kiowa. (By the way, I look ridiculous in a blazer

or suit but always wear them to speak out of respect for my audiences. When I lecture at CSU, I usually wear Harley T-shirts.)

I arrived in Kiowa at the dinner hour. It looked like a ghost town. There was no one to ask where the high school was. After a while, I spotted the sheriff's car, parked, and walked toward it. The sheriff rolled down the window. I noticed immediately that he was the most non-Jewish looking man I had ever seen: lots of lines and angles and muscles in his face, his eyes covered by mirrored sunglasses. He made Clint Eastwood look rabbinical. "Officer," I said, "can you direct me to the high school?" He slowly removed his shades. "You the speaker?" he asked. "What speaker?" I stammered. "That animal rots [rights] feller," he replied. Oh, my God! The word was out. My mind jumped to Spencer Tracy in *Bad Day at Black Rock*. He pointed me toward the high school, his face an expressionless mask.

Things did not get better as I entered the high school and confronted 150 unsmiling ranchers and their wives. "Hi," I said idiotically. No one responded—just stared. Fine—to hell with them. I'm not here to be loved. My dog loves me. I chatted with Melissa, and time passed. She stood up and introduced me—as "the man who teaches animal rights in the vet school." I had just begun to entertain the thought that this was not the most politic introduction when the audience began to boo, hiss, catcall, and stomp their feet. And it continued. Stunned (nothing like this had ever happened before), I glanced at my watch, seized by an inexplicable desire to know how long they would boo. The ruckus continued for one minute and thirty-eight seconds, roughly the time it takes to read a typewritten page out loud. During that period, my shock turned to indignation, and then to fury. Sons of bitches. I was not going to take this crap from them. But what to do?

I sketched a plan in my mind. As the booing waned, I asked, in a cold, dead voice, "Are you finished yet?" A few yelled, "No" and continued to boo. I asked again in fifteen seconds. Same result. After another minute, they grew tired of the game, and the cafeteria grew quiet. I stared at them without saying anything. The room grew even quieter. Finally, I spoke. "You guys have read my stuff—is that why you're booing?" "No," they said. "Well, you've heard me speak before, and that's why you're booing?" "No," they shouted, "and we don't want to hear you tonight." I continued, "Have your sons and daughters been in my classes and carried my message here, and *that's* why you're booing?" Again they answered no. My eyes narrowed. "Then you can't be booing my ideas, because you don't even know what they are. So what could it be? I bet you're looking up here and seeing this hippie, commie, Jew bastard, faggot professor and *that's* why you're booing." They cheered. "OK, that's what I thought," I said. "If that's the case, I'll take you

outside one at a time and kick your fucking asses. Who's first?" I looked at a stocky man in the first row. "How about you, fatso? I heard you booing?"

I should relate the phenomenology of what I was experiencing. While part of me was doing this song and dance, another part was sort of on the ceiling, above the fray, watching what was happening and quietly wondering whether I should be doing it. As angry as I was, that part was quickly suppressed.

At any rate, the room was now silent. I remember thinking, idiotically, that it seemed as if the silence was a positive phenomenon, a thing, not the absence of sound. Perhaps I could slice it and sell it—fresh Colorado silence. They stared at me openmouthed. I kept ranting. "Where I grew up you learn early that you don't take shit. If you take it once, you take it forever. You guys aren't even paying me for this talk—even if you were, I couldn't put up with this crap." My eyes scanned the room. They were listening. "Do I have your attention?" They nodded. I said, "Good. Now I'm going to ask you two questions. If the answers turn out right, we may have a profitable evening. If they don't, I'll go back to Fort Collins, and you guys can go out and lynch somebody or whatever you do for recreation." After a moment, someone said, "OK, ask your questions."

I said, "First of all, do you guys believe in right and wrong?" "Hell, yes," they replied. "This is Kiowa." "So far so good. Second question: Would you do anything at all to an animal to increase profit and productivity? In other words, if you could increase feed efficiency by torturing a cow's eye with hot needles, would you do it?" "Hell, no," they chorused. "Good," I said. "So we're just arguing about price." It was as if someone had introduced a vacuum cleaner into the room and sucked out the hostility. I started my lecture at quarter after seven and finished at nine thirty. "Time for a break," I said, eyeing the coffee and cookies. No one offered me any, so I invited questions. The first was "Tell us what's wrong with ranching from an animal-welfare point of view." "How the hell should I know?" I shot back. "I'm just a hippie, faggot, commie, Jew-bastard professor. You tell me." And they did. They told me everything I would have told them, plus a number of issues I had never heard of before. This was my first encounter with the honesty and common sense that characterizes this population. Indeed, when they listed knife castration as a welfare issue, I gave them an out, pointing out that many veterinarians believe that animals don't feel pain. One man pulled out his Buck knife and said, "If you think it don't hurt, how'd you like yours cut off with this? If it don't hurt, why the hell are they bellowin' and struggling?"

The evening continued with rapid-fire discussion and no dead time. No cookies for me. Eventually, the custodian said, "Have a heart folks. I can't

go home until I lock up the high school.” I looked at my watch—almost five hours had passed. I still had a three-hour drive. Enough. I walked over to Melissa to say goodbye, chatted for a few minutes, then left. As I walked toward my car in the dimly lit parking lot, I noticed five men following me. Awash as I was in adrenaline, I assumed they were taking me up on my challenge. So be it. I took off my jacket and tie and glasses, placed them on the roof of the car, and put my back up against the car. “What the hell do you guys want?” I snarled. They were all forty to sixty years old, and one man was clearly the leader. “We came to apologize, Doc,” he said, extending his right hand. Coney Island experience kicked in. If I shake hands with him, I lose one weapon—my hands—that I can’t afford to lose. I was about to turn my back when it occurred to me that perhaps he meant it. If he did, not shaking would be ignoble, graceless, so I stuck out my hand, and we shook. “We’re sorry, Doc. We had no call to boo you before you even said anything,” he said. “Thanks for not walking out on us. We learned a lot from your talk.” After I shook each man’s hand, and said, “No problem. See you guys next time.” I drove off, and when I was far out of town, I stopped the car, shook like a leaf, and cried like a baby. And the story is not over. I’ll finish it later.

I have never had another incident quite as dramatic, and eventually my reputation became such that I was greeted as a friend. On one occasion, my small son and four students accompanied me to Laramie, Wyoming, where I was to speak at the “Summit,” an annual conference for ranchers at the fairgrounds. The audience was cold and surly until I was done. Then an immaculate man in western attire, probably eight-five years old, stood up with the aid of a pair of canes and said, “Thank you for eloquently putting into words how I have tried to live my life.” I even got a positive story in the Laramie local paper, the *Boomerang*. I became so comfortable with these people that I would tease them. For example, since cowboy humor is very similar to New York Jewish humor, I would often tell them they were the lost tribes who, as Bugs Bunny put it, “took a wrong turn at Albuquerke [Albuquerque].”

I have addressed some fifteen thousand ranchers since my first talk, all the way from northern Alberta to southern New Mexico, from California to Nebraska. I have found them to be warm, open, tough, independent, open-minded, and kind people who, unlike M.D./Ph.D.s hear what you say, not what they expect you to say. To help cement my image, I often went to give talks on the Harley, my little boy on the back. Ironically, he became the “go to” person at Stanford University on western ranching, a topic about which students were insatiably curious.

Another good story concerns the cowboy “poet” and comedian Baxter

Black, of whom one of my cattle veterinarian friends once said, “It’s a damn good thing he’s funny, because he’s not worth shit as a veterinarian.” A few years after I started teaching the vet class, I received an unexpected call from Black during which he mocked my course and animal ethics, finally desisting when I offered him the opportunity to come to the class and debate me. I assured him that, to be fair, I would tie half my mind behind my back. (Yes, I originated that phrase well before Rush Limbaugh.) That ended that. There is no way a cheap-shot artist will engage in genuine discussion. A few years after that, I was invited to address the Bull Test Seminar dinner, a big event in Worland, Wyoming. (A bull test is a meeting that centers on finding the best bull genetics.) I found out that Black would be the after-dinner speaker. I must have appeared uncomfortable, because my host asked why that bothered me. I told him the story and said that, while I criticize some aspects of ranching, Black obsequiously lavishes praise on them. My host put his arm on my shoulder and said, “Don’t worry, Doc. He’s a paid entertainer. We understand that a friend tells you what you *need* to hear, not what you want to hear. You’re a good friend.” That story encapsulates why I am proud to call many of these people my friends.

One of my longtime cowboy friends is a man named Barney Cosner who introduced me to the issues of rodeo, fairs, and livestock shows. When I met Barney in the early 1980s, he was livestock manager of the Texas State Fair and invited me to speak to the Fair and Rodeo Association’s annual meeting of managers, held that year in Jackson, Wyoming. Barney is a man of courage, ethics, and integrity. In my speech to the group of open, friendly people, most of them from a cowboy background, I talked about emerging societal ethics for animals and warned the audience of what would soon be unacceptable: anything that hurt animals for fun, notably calf roping and steer tripping (the latter is illegal in all but a few states). I enjoyed the meeting greatly and had a very pleasant dinner with a man I liked immediately, Charles W. (“Chuck”) Sylvester, manager of the large and prestigious National Western Livestock Show and Rodeo in Denver.

Through my friendship with Chuck, I had an experience that really showed me how much I had been accepted by cowboys for myself and not as a “wannabe.” (I see Chuck a few times a year for dinner, at his annual party, and at the stock show, and I supported his ill-fated but noble run for governor as an independent write-in candidate in 2006.) I got a call from Eric Mills, a witty crusading animal-rights activist from San Francisco who has fought to improve rodeo in California. Eric had taken my son to an animal-rights demonstration against crated veal when Mikey was about six and given him a sign to carry. (Thus, my son has done one more demonstration than I have, demonstrations not being my style.) I was amused by Mikey’s

enthusiasm and even more amused when a passing yuppie playfully grabbed his sign to tease him. I barely prevented Mikey from taking out his kneecap with a side kick.

Eric told me that he had received a call from a Denver activist saying that National Western was putting on a Mexican rodeo. Mexican rodeos are atrocious, particularly because they involve horse tripping, in which a competitor ropes a horse's legs at a full gallop. Horse tripping is now illegal in most states. (I was later to work with the American Association of Equine Practitioners president, the excellent Jay Merriam, another man I am proud to call a friend, to eliminate these spectacles.) I told Eric that even though I had no firsthand knowledge of what the National Western was doing, I would guarantee that, knowing Chuck Sylvester, there would be no animal-abusive Mexican rodeo and told him to call Chuck and use my name. I was correct. What was planned was a rodeo with a Mexican flavor (mariachis, dancing, and the like) but nothing abusive (besides the ubiquitous calf roping present at all rodeos and the source of my major critique of rodeo). Eric confirmed this with Chuck, and Chuck was touched by my willingness to assure a critic about his decency.

Chuck and I worked together over many years. When my cowboy friends elected me to the National Western Stock Show Association, he helped me establish the association's Animal Care and Use Committee to ensure proper treatment of the animals at the show. The committee has done good work that has ranged from appointing a group of retired veterinarians to do plainclothes patrols of the show to ensure that the animals are receiving adequate food and water and are handled properly and gently to ensuring that a draft horse on which children sit while their pictures are being taken does not have to stand on concrete and hurt his feet and legs. I was surprised when Chuck asked me to stay overnight at his ranch in Wyoming and accompany him when the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) toured the land he was leasing from the government. The tours ostensibly are done to ensure that the land is properly managed and grazed. Under President Bill Clinton, the BLM managers were responsive to environmentalists' demands that ranchers be prevented from grazing their cattle on public land, and the tours often turned into bureaucratic bullying and browbeating. I asked Chuck what value my presence would have. He just smiled and said, "You'll see."

I spent a pleasant evening and morning at his beautiful ranch, talking to a group of his neighbors. At breakfast before the tour, I asked the dozen or so ranchers present a question I had asked many times before, a litmus-paper question for identifying the husbandry ethic—"How many of you have spent more on a sick animal than the animal is worth?" (I knew the answer; indeed, my students with ranching backgrounds had taught me

that the only time they had even been punished or yelled at by their dads was when they had gone to a dance or movie without caring for the animals first.) The answer was: everyone in the room. One woman, a fifth-generation rancher, thought I was critical of doing that and said, with an edge, “What’s wrong with that, Buster?” (Buster?) “Nothing by my lights,” I replied, “but if I were an agricultural economist, I would tell you that one does not spend twenty dollars to produce a widget that one then sells for ten dollars.” “Well, that’s your mistake, Buster,” she said. “We’re not dealing with widgets. We’re dealing with living things we’re responsible for.” You can see why I was so willing to help Chuck. Ranchers are the last large group of people practicing husbandry, or what my colleague Temple Grandin has called the “ancient contract” with animals, a highly symbiotic relationship that endured essentially unchanged for thousands of years. Ranching depends on large, extensive grazing areas. Much of that land is under federal control by the BLM. If ranching were removed from public land, there would be virtually no husbandry agriculture. The BLM of late is not kind to ranchers, and its officials were coming to check on the condition of Chuck’s leased land.

We were to meet the BLM people near the firehouse in Jeffrey City, Wyoming. Chuck, who is politically savvy, had invited dozens of rancher friends and a husband-and-wife cowboy-and-lawyer team who specialize in suing the BLM, as well as me. I still had no idea why I was there. It became clearer when we got to the firehouse. Seven or eight BLM people showed up in Jeeps led by a man I will call Jack Murphy, a pink-and-white Irishman who did not like ranchers. He had expected only Chuck and the adjacent landholder; he was greeted by about sixty people in dozens of trucks. “What is this?” he asked, turning red. “Just some friends,” Chuck said. “This is public, isn’t it?” Murphy began to hand out index cards, asking us all to write down our names and affiliations. Since I did not look like a rancher—I have been described as looking like a cross between a rabbi and a biker—his gaze focused on me. I began to get the idea. I filled out the card—B. Rollin, CSU, Distinguished Professor. Murphy turned pinker as he read it. “CSU,” he said. “Long way from here.” “Yup,” I said. “You in agronomy?” “Nope,” I replied. “Range management?” “Nope.” “What are you in?” “This and that,” I said, enjoying the moment. “What does that mean?” he stammered. I said, “Vet med, animal science, and philosophy.” “Ph-Ph-Ph-Philosophy?” he said. “Wh-What’s your interest?” I put a brawny arm on his shoulder and said, “I deal in conflict resolution and want to see how you handle these people.”

We spent the next six hours bouncing over rangeland while Murphy pointed out degradation I could not detect even as he pointed it out. Finally, he stopped us all at the pièce de résistance, a minuscule stream about three

feet wide, and pointed to it accusingly: “Look at this riparian area. The banks are eroded. I had to show this to the head of the Sierra Club last week. I was mortified. He was horrified. I’m going to have to fence this off so cattle can’t do more damage.” The woman who had called me “Buster” got emotional. She said to Murphy, “I am a fifth-generation rancher here. My family’s blood, sweat, and tears are in this land. This Sierra Club fellow, he is maybe here one time. Doesn’t my interest count more?” “No,” said Murphy. “I protect the land for all, and you people cause me great embarrassment.”

I hate bureaucrats—especially bureaucrats who brandish their authority as a cudgel. I hated Murphy and walked away before I said something I might regret. I walked about a mile in a spiral. Suddenly something struck me as I examined the ground. I rushed back to the spot where Murphy was winding up his chastisement. I raised my hand; he acknowledged me. “Mr. Murphy, I’m a city boy, so forgive my ignorance,” I said as he eyed me suspiciously. “Are you saying that cows did this damage?” “Of course,” he replied. I gave him a gunfighter look. “Well, I just walked a spiral for about a mile, and if it was cows, there would be cow shit, right? All I saw was horse-shit.” I watched him pale as it dawned on him where I was going. “Chuck runs a few horses but keeps them fenced in by his house. He doesn’t run horses out here. In fact, only the BLM runs horses out here.” Murphy turned deep red and blustered, “We only run about thirty.” I said, “Gee, Chuck and I counted over ninety this morning alone near his house.” “Impossible,” Murphy said. I smiled—with my mouth but not my eyes. “I guess we’ve got a factual dispute here. As a matter of fact, I have a friend in Lander [where Murphy was based], a wildlife biologist who counts antelope for the oil companies. I could have him come out and count horses.” “Great idea,” said one of Murphy’s lackeys. “No,” he shouted, looking daggers at the underling, who reddened and said no more. “Why not?” I asked. “Be-Be-Because it will stress them.” “Yeah, sure,” I said. Applause broke out from the ranchers. I later heard that this was the first time Murphy had dealt fairly with ranchers. Chuck just smiled at me. I had earned my bed and breakfast.

I once went to Billings, Montana, to lecture on rodeo to the Northern Rodeo Association. I was so well received that the association asked me to give the lecture again when I was done so they wouldn’t miss any points. On another occasion, I was invited to Rocky Mountain College in Billings to talk to a group of ranchers about animal ethics. When they asked me how much time to allot, I said, “As much as you can give me so we can have dialogue.” Imagine my surprise when I was scheduled for eight hours, with an hour for lunch. Despite my trepidation, we went two hours over. In the middle of the afternoon, one woman asked if we could break so she could go to the bathroom. The group said, “You go pee; we don’t want to stop.”

If you are wondering why I have such an excellent relationship with ranchers, this is a good time to explain. It is my contention that western ranchers, from northern Alberta to the Mexican border, from Kansas to California, are the last large group of people in agriculture practicing “animal husbandry.” Husbandry is the traditional essence of agricultural success and, sadly, is now almost extinct.

The traditional account of the growth of human civilization out of a hunter–gatherer society invariably invokes the rise of agriculture: the domestication of animals and the cultivation of crops. This allowed as predictable a food supply as humans could create amid floods, droughts, hurricanes, typhoons, extremes of heat and cold, fires, and other vagaries of the natural world. Indeed, the use of animals enabled the development of successful crop agriculture, with the animals providing labor and locomotion, as well as food and fiber. This is what eventually resulted in the “ancient contract” with animals. Humans selected animals that were congenial to human management and further shaped their temperaments and production traits through breeding and artificial selection. These animals included cattle, sheeps, goats, horses, dogs, poultry and other birds, swine, ungulates, and other animals capable of domestication. As people grew more effective at breeding and managing animals, productivity increased. And as humans benefited, so did the animals. They were provided with the necessities of life in a predictable way. This gave rise to the concept of husbandry, the remarkable practice and articulation of the symbiotic contract.

“Husbandry” is derived from the Old Norse words “*bus*” and “*bond*”; animals were bonded to one’s household. The essence of husbandry was care. Humans put animals into the best environments possible for their survival, the environments for which they had evolved and been selected. In addition, humans provided sustenance, water, shelter, protection from predation, such medical attention as was available, help in birthing, food during famine, water during drought, safe surroundings, and comfortable appointments. Eventually, what was born of necessity and common sense became articulated in terms of a moral obligation that was inextricably bound up with self-interest. In the biblical story of Noah, we learn that even as God preserves humans, humans preserve animals. The ethic of husbandry is, in fact, taught throughout the Bible: The animals must rest on the Sabbath even as we do; one is not to seethe a calf in its mother’s milk (so we do not grow insensitive to animals’ needs and natures); we can violate the Sabbath to save an animal’s life. Proverbs tells us that “the wise man cares for his animals.” The Old Testament is replete with injunctions against inflicting unnecessary pain and suffering on animals, as exemplified in the strange

story of Balaam, who beats his ass and is reprimanded as the animal speaks through the grace of God.

The true power of the husbandry ethic is best expressed in the Twenty-third Psalm: “The Lord is My Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside the still waters, He restoreth my soul.” We want no more from God than what the good shepherd provides to his animals. Indeed, consider a lamb in ancient Judea. Without a shepherd, the lamb would not easily find forage or water; it would not survive the multitude of predators—lions, jackals, hyenas, birds of prey, wild dogs, velociraptors (just checking to see that you are paying attention)—the Bible tells us prowled the land. Under the aegis of the shepherd, the lamb lives well and safely. In return, the animals provide their products and sometimes their lives, but while they live, they live well. Even slaughter, the taking of the animal’s life, must be as painless as possible, performed with a sharp knife by a trained person to avoid unnecessary pain. Ritual slaughter in antiquity was a far kinder death than bludgeoning; most important, it was the most humane modality available at the time. The metaphor of the good shepherd is emblazoned in the Western mind. To this day, ministers are called shepherds of their congregations, and the word “pastor” derives from “pastoral.” When Plato discusses the ideal political ruler in *Republic*, he deploys the shepherd-and-sheep metaphor: The ruler is to his people as the shepherd is to his flock.

Animal husbandry can be characterized as putting square pegs in square holes, round pegs in round holes, and creating as little friction as possible in doing so. Ranchers still practice and believe in husbandry. Ranching is basically unchanged structurally from the nineteenth century: Cattle graze on vast ranges and get to express their *telos* more fully than any other agricultural animal. The modern rancher may differ from his nineteenth-century predecessor, perhaps, by riding fence with a motorcycle, but even that is largely unchanged and can be done on horseback. More than 90 percent of the fifteen thousand ranchers with whom I have spoken heartily endorse the notion of rights for animals I have discussed—a greater percentage of them, in fact, than of the general public. This is because husbandry *must* work with the animals’ natures and does not override them with technology. The biggest animal-welfare issues in ranching are so-called management practices—castration without anesthesia, hot-iron branding without anesthesia, dehorning without anesthesia. Every rancher answers the question “If God came down and said that these practices were banned, would you go out of business?” the same way: “Of course not.” But it is easier to get them to admit that these practices are wrong than to get them to adopt alternatives.

I—and animals—have benefited greatly from my friendship with the Colorado Cattlemen’s Association and Colorado Cattle Feeders Association. Out of that relationship, and my relationship with the Colorado dairy industry, came the passage of the strongest “downer cow” law in the United States. (Downer cows are animals that are unable to walk because of illness or injury and are sometimes dragged to a truck and shipped to slaughter and dragged out at the destination.) I was lecturing to the Colorado Cattlemen in the 1980s at a meeting. Among other issues, I was discussing downer cows. “What do you guys think of that?” I asked. I was told, “It ain’t right. We should eat our mistakes, not ship them.” One large man stood up and said, “I’m Dr. Don Klinkerman, a sale barn vet. I think you’re full of shit.” Music to my ears. “Care to debate that, pal?” I asked, twirling my imaginary six guns. “Nope,” he said. “I need to think about it.” Five years later, he called me. “I thought about it,” he said. “Want to debate?” I asked. “No,” he said. “I decided you’re right. We shouldn’t allow shipping of downers.”

He enlisted dairy farmer managers, a major source of downers due to hypocalcemia (“milk fever”) and traditionally the source of opposition to stopping the practice. I already had developed a good relationship with the dairy people—I am the official Colorado Dairy Welfare Extension Specialist—and they were very open and supported the bill. I told him I would be happy to help. He said he would call me if he needed me. I eventually got a call; he was experiencing hostility from the sale barn vets, as sale barns made some money from downers. I said I would do what I could and called one of my colleagues at CSU, the large-animal veterinarian Cleon Kimberling, a legend across the West. Dr. Kimberling made some calls; the pressure ended and the bill passed.

The most appropriate story to conclude this chapter occurred in 1997, after the passage of North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), designed to loosen trade barriers among the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), part of whose job is farm-animal health, was accustomed to preventing Mexican cattle from crossing the U.S. border, because Mexican cattle often have tuberculosis and brucellosis, which wasn’t present in the U.S. herd. When NAFTA passed, they could no longer keep these animals out. In its trademark heavy-handed way, the USDA decided that the appropriate response was to use hot-iron branding on the faces of Mexican cattle so they could be readily identified by a large, clearly visible “M” and carefully watched for disease.

I was made aware of this by the famed animal activist Henry Spira, who had successfully organized the first massive animal-rights demonstration in 1989 against sexual-behavior experiments on cats done by the Museum

of Natural History. He rallied Manhattan office workers to protest outside the museum during their lunch hour on beautiful spring days. The protest was immense and eventually forced the museum to stop invasive research. I knew Henry quite well from 1978 until his death and liked and respected him. He was the person who called public attention to the infamous Draize eye irritancy test done on rabbits to ensure the safety of cosmetics. Henry had gone to Revlon with a professionally made poster showing rabbits having their eyes irritated and the slogan “How Many Rabbits Must Revlon Blind for Your Beauty?” He told cosmetics executives that he would put the ads in every subway system in the world unless they funded the Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing at Johns Hopkins University to research alternatives to using animals. The industry contributed, and the center made great progress under the leadership of Alan Goldberg. (I was honored a few years ago to receive the Spira Award from the center at an International Congress on Alternatives in Berlin.)

Henry called me to ask where he could get a branding iron. I was surprised but assured him I could get one and asked why. He then told me about his campaign against the USDA's face branding. Although Henry lived in the most modest circumstances, taking only something like twenty thousand per year in salary from his organization, he spent great amounts to protect animals. He always had in reserve the fee for a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times*. He sent me copies of the anti-USDA ads he had already run. As with everything else Henry did, they were classic. For example, one ad showed a child with a USDA face brand and the slogan “Good Thing USDA Isn't in Charge of Child Care.” In another, he described the face-branding atrocity and gave the Secretary of Agriculture's home telephone number, resulting in thousands of (urban) phone calls to that hapless bureaucrat. Anyway, he wanted a branding iron as a prop. He also told me that investigators from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals had video footage of a face-branded cow enveloped in smoke from her own burned face and that some animals, branded too close to the orbital, had had their eyes boiled out. The USDA also had Mexican veterinarians spay the females on the Mexican side of the border with no anesthesia or analgesia and close the wound with metal “hog clips” that had gotten caught in slaughterhouse equipment and sent deadly shrapnel shooting in all directions. I also knew that the USDA, in the early 1980s, had been convicted of cruelty in a New York State court for face-branding dairy cattle when it was buying up dairy cows to stabilize the price of milk and needed permanent identification to keep the farmers from recycling the cows into dairies.

At this time, my book *Farm Animal Welfare* (1995) had appeared. The book grew out of a research project I had done on farm-animal welfare and

had originated as a USDA report. I thought, having essentially introduced USDA officials to the farm-animal-welfare issue, I might be able to reason with them. I told Henry that I could probably get them to stop the face branding. I called contacts at the department and was told, in essence, to butt out because this was a done deal. I was distraught. I already had concerns about branding on the rump—but *face* branding? I tried every trick in my arsenal. In my presence, Jim Voss, dean of veterinary medicine at CSU, even called the bureaucrat who had signed the face-branding order, who was a former veterinary school dean, but got nowhere and cut the conversation short by saying, “You’re just another mealy-mouthed bureaucrat.” After slamming down the phone, he remarked, “That’s the end of a twenty-year friendship.” I began to call rancher friends who were also horrified. I thought about starting a petition drive among them.

A few days later, I received a call from the Colorado Cattlemen’s Association, which had heard about my concerns and invited me to talk to the board of directors. I agreed, put on a suit, and went to Denver, very tense. It didn’t help when I began to speak and they began to tease me. “You seem nervous today, Doc. You’re usually such a cocky little bastard.” (“Little,” of course, is a relative term.) I responded by saying that this was a very troubling issue: bad for the animals, a black eye to ranching. “Relax,” they said. “We’ve already decided to back you. See those phones over there? We’ve got the California and Washington State cattlemen on them. They’ll back you, too. What we need from you, being that you are a wordsmith, is to stay for lunch and help us write the statement we’ll give you.” I was amazed. In contrast, the National Cattlemen’s Association supported the USDA. I stayed and helped them write a brief, to-the-point statement opposing face branding. The secretary typed it onto letterhead, and I grabbed it and took off, making a brief stop in the men’s room. At the adjacent urinal was a very large man who, I had been warned, was the biggest redneck in the group. He turned to me and said, “Thanks for taking this on, Doc. I’m eighty-four, and I declare that if I saw someone branding an animal on the face, I’d have to kick the shit out of him.”

I drove about five miles and stopped dead. I had forgotten to ask what I could do with the written statement. Could I give it to Henry to use in an ad? Could I threaten the USDA with it? I went back to the association’s headquarters and asked the executive director. He said that it was a board decision, so I needed to go back to the boardroom. I did, and the chairman of the board said, “You again? What now?” I explained. He looked me in the eye and said, “Doc, we talked the talk; you walk the walk. It’s your document now. We trust you.” He called for a break and, as he walked me back to my car, said, “You haven’t changed a bit.” “How do you know?” I

replied. "I don't know you." "Oh, but I know you," he said. "How?" I asked. He replied, "Remember that night in Kiowa? Remember the guy who came out to apologize? That was me." He shook my hand.

I called the USDA. My contacts' reply was "We already told you. It's a done deal." I let them know that I had new information, to which they replied, "Give us a week to ask for new comments, and then it will be rescinded." It was. Henry called to thank me and to offer a full-page ad thanking the Cattlemen's Associations of Colorado, Washington, and California, but they said no thanks. The National Cattlemen's Association (a much more bureaucratic group) left me a voice mail the day of my visit to the board saying, "Keep your nose out of our business." I called back knowing who had left it, although he was too gutless to leave his name. I told him he wasn't big enough to tell me where to put my nose.

It is incidents such as that one that led one eighty-year-old rancher in rural Colorado to stay after I had finished my talk and, when everyone else had left, look me in the eye and say, "I got you figured out, Doc. . . . Way I figure, you were born too late. You should have lived a hundred years ago and been a gunfighter. You love getting us all riled and then taking us on and getting us to agree. Closest thing you can do that's like gun fighting." I can't disagree.