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Salida hosts starving cattle seized from ranch in South Park

Audrey Gilpin - Mail Staff Writer



Veterinarians are determining age, body condition and conducting pregnancy tests on cattle at Rocky Mountain Livestock Sales east of Salida. Photo by Audrey Gilpin

About 300 malnourished and emaciated cattle from Park County are being fed and monitored by Colorado Department of Agriculture personnel at Rocky Mountain Livestock Sales east of Salida.

Acting under a court order, the department Bureau of Animal Protection and Park County Sheriff's Office personnel seized the cattle from Park County ranch manager Vernon Wagner May 14.

A hearing will be held at 9 a.m. today in Park County District Court to determine if Wagner is an "unfit owner," officials said.

Authorities said criminal investigation by Park County Sheriff's Officers is continuing and charges could be forthcoming.

Scot Dutcher, Bureau of Animal Protection chief, was at Rocky Mountain Livestock Sales Monday and told The Mountain Mail 144 cows were found dead on the ranch. Officials said total number of cattle on the property is unclear but estimates range from 800 to 1,400.

Although 300 cattle were transported to Salida, department personnel are feeding the remaining cattle on Wagner's property.

Using a body condition scale of 1 to 9 with severe emaciation being 1 and obesity at a 9, Dutcher said cattle brought to Salida and tested have scored 1 or 2.

Continuing to evaluate cattle Monday in Salida, Dutcher said most are cows of varying ages. Veterinarians are determining if females are pregnant.

"Given the nature of my job, I've seen many animal cruelty cases. This is one of the worst," Dutcher said while pointing out large bald spots on the cattle.

"They've lost hair because of parasites," he said.

Some animals are "so weak," Dutcher said, they can hardly stand up in the chutes while being evaluated.

Wagner owns a number of the seized cattle and is under contract to care for the other livestock.

Don Smart of Utah is one of three owners who have cattle under Wagner's care. Smart saw his cattle for the first time in Salida Monday while veterinarians tested the animals.

"The first I heard of the cattle's condition was two to three weeks ago when I got a call from the state," Smart said. "They're not in the dire condition I was led to believe even though nutrition is needed."

Smart has had cattle under contract with Wagner for 10 years and said he saw his cattle in the fall when they were ready for auction.

"I've always had a fairly good return. The (ranch) area is so vast. I honestly feel (Wagner) didn't know, which doesn't take away his responsibility."

Smart said severe weather could have contributed to the condition of the cattle.

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"The grass came up slower this year. The cattle needed supplemental feeding during the winter."

In a departmental press release, state veterinarian Keith Roehr said, "Mr. Wagner accepted a responsibility by the owners of these animals to provide proper nutrition. He failed miserably in that responsibility and animals suffered."



Reader Comments

Posted: Tuesday, December 28, 2010

Article comment by: **Get Whip**

Unfortunately an old friend pointed me to this article. Mr. Wagner has a long history of questionable business and ranching practices. New location and old practices. When will everyone get he just has an unstoppable problem?

Posted: Sunday, August 29, 2010

Article comment by: **Werner Bock**

Ranchers and farmers hold a good chunk of real estate, much to the chagrin of many local cliques, big business, speculators and eventually some political nutcases. They are many and the farmers and ranchers are few, and are so thin stretched, trying to hang on for dear survival, the perfect target for some greedy criminals, and looking at all the technology, especially coming from the military sector, they can for sure make the animals look, like they have been starved to death. Directed energy weapons, modifying the air, by oxidizing nitrogen and changing oxygen into ozon, energybeam focused in front of the nose of the animal. Animal breathes in this mixture with deadly consequences. When the animal survives, rapid weightloss, several hundred pounds within two or three days due to severe internal injuries, which in turn causes massive dehydration, animals look like they have been starved to death, but autopsies will reveal massive corrosive internal injuries and hemorrhaging of the internal organs. One of the signs of this exposure too is that the hair and skin come off in patches on the animals that survive. On my farm the vets have been covering up those atrocities now for over 35 years, and were supported in their coverup by "Canada's Finest" the Mounties and the New Brunswick department of Agriculture. Over the last 35 years I have accumulated plenty of documentation, including over 1000 photoes. A few month ago I posted over 100 of these photoes on the internet. They can be accessed by googling my name; werner bock cattle. Sorry I have not posted the audio yet, but it is soon to come. It is high time that people take their head out of the sand and catch up with the least half century of technology. It sure does not take the criminals half of a century, and what harms and kills cattle, can harm and kill people too. If anybody wants to know more about, research it , and or give me a ring: 506 756 8687 werner bock

Posted: Saturday, May 22, 2010

Article comment by: **Carol Seamon**

Aren't they calving right now and could that possibly be the reason they shouldn't be moved? I believe Mr. Wagner has been ranching far longer than most and has been quite successful!

Posted: Tuesday, May 18, 2010

Article comment by: **Dave Kaess**

I find it interesting that Mr. Wagner is concerned that moving the cattle will kill them, while his vet deems the cattle healthy. If there is a question that moving them will kill them, they are too weak. The fact that they are counting on grass in May in South Park shows how ignorant the Wagners really are. I am a fith generation farmer and rancher I know that sometimes June is too soon to have green grass at high altitudes. Lets put Mr Wagner in a room with no food and water for a few weeks and see how he does.

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