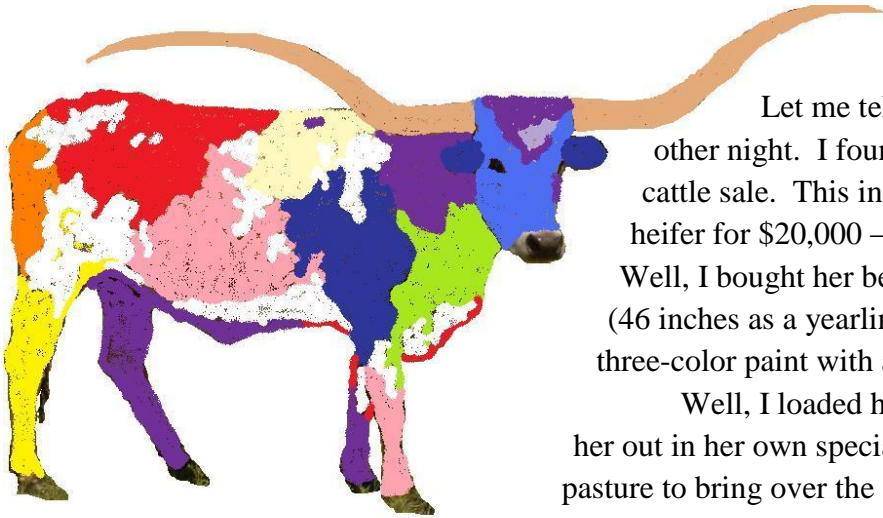


# . . . for Horns and Color

By Jim Warren



Let me tell you about a nightmare I had the other night. I found myself at a big Texas Longhorn cattle sale. This in itself is not strange, but I bought a heifer for \$20,000 – now you know I was dreaming! Well, I bought her because she had enormous horns (46 inches as a yearling) and flashy color – she was a three-color paint with a grulla head and roan tail.

Well, I loaded her up and took her home, jumped her out in her own special padded trap and went to my bull pasture to bring over the \$10,000 bull I had bought last year. (He had enormous horns and flashy color.) I jumped him out in the trap with her and sat back to wait. Well, that was the longest thirteen months I have ever spent – usually I had to wait only nine months, but for some reason it took thirteen this time. (I figured it was just my nerves.)

Anyway, one morning I drove up to the trap fully expecting to see a bright new calf and there was my new heifer lying on her side looking like a grounded blimp. Well, you can imagine – I thought she was dead! I ran across the trap and just before I got to her she raised up her head and looked at me as much to say, “You sure took your time, where have you been?” Boy was I relieved to see her move! So I got a hold of her horns and tried to neck her up – but she wouldn’t budge. About the time I stepped back to wipe the sweat out of my eyes I noticed her straining and it finally dawned on me that she must be fixing to have her calf. Well, I waited and the heifer strained, and I waited and she strained and this went on for about half an hour with no results. (By this time I was about to have a calf.)

## Call the Vet!

Finally it dawned on me that something was happening to my twenty thousand dollar heifer that I wasn’t used to – she was having trouble calving! So needless to say I tripped over my ace cow dog who was asleep behind me, leaped the wire gap in a single bound, nearly tore the door handle off my pickup to get to the mobile phone and do something else I wasn’t use to – call the vet! I didn’t even know the number. I just got the operator and she seemed to be used to vet emergencies so she got him right away. Well, I told him to get out to my padded pens as quick as he could – one of my cows was sick (I didn’t want to tell him what she was sick of, but I knew he always carried his calf-puller with him.)

Then I whizzed back to my heifer to see if there had been any further developments – and there hadn’t. I started waiting again – I couldn’t sit down though – I was pacing up and down wearing out the grass when the Doc roared up in a cloud of dust. I didn’t know if I could tell him what was wrong, but I finally kind of hung my head and mumbled in a low voice. “She’s having little trouble calving.”

The Doc went over and rolled back her eyelids and looked in her eye. I said, “No, Doc that’s not where the trouble is.” What he said was unintelligible – I was glad of that. Then he squatted down at the other end and went to feeling around and saying “Uhhuh, ah hah,” and other professional words while I wrung my hands and got back in the groove I had worn earlier pacing up and down. Finally I couldn’t stand it any longer so I ran over to his truck and said, “Doc, can I bring you this uh – this uh calf puller?” He had gotten up about that time and came over to wash his hands (and arm). He said, “No, Jim, we won’t need that.” The tone of his voice told me more than the words and all I could say was, “What is it, Doc?”

“Well,” he said, “that calf is too big for your heifer to have naturally. She’d never make it – puller or no puller.”

“Then do something Doc! That’s an expensive heifer.” I didn’t want to tell him how expensive.

He said, “We can take it with a C-section and should have good results.” I said, “Well then let’s get on with the program Doc, I can’t take much more of this waiting.”

## **One-Hundred Pounder**

So to make a long story somewhat shorter the operation was a great success. Doc pulled out the best looking one-hundred pound, three-colored heifer calf I had ever seen.

The next day the cow was up grazing around the trap and the calf was nursing away when I got there to check on them. I still watched them pretty close for three or four days though and everything looked fine for a couple of weeks. Then I began to notice that the calf spent a lot of time laying around and didn’t look like it was keeping up with the size of my calves in the pasture right next door. I made all kinds of excuses for this occurrence – young cow, first calf, hard delivery, full moon on the tenth, wind out of the west – you know, all those things which usually cause calves to do poorly.

After a couple more days I couldn’t stand it any longer – that was my prize calf from my \$20,000 cow sired by a \$10,000 bull. I had to see what was the matter. So I called Ol’ Doc again (I had his number on the sun visor of my pickup now) and he came right out. First, he checked the calf over real good, said “uh huh and ah hah” again and went to look at the cow. After he followed her around the pen a couple of times he went over and sat down.

“Well Doc,” I said, “should I sit down too or what?”

“No,” he said, “it’s not that bad. I run into it all the time in other herds. Let’s analyze this thing and you’ll see it clear. What is that between that cow’s hind legs?”

“Doc, you’re not teaching Anatomy 101 – that’s her udder, that’s what it is.”

“Alright,” he said, “but look at those heifers right next to her in that pasture.”

Well, it finally hit me. Those heifers had bags that looked like basketballs compared to this one. Doc saw me sorta leaning over the fence sobbing and said, “Don’t take it so hard. You won’t have any trouble finding a nurse cow. All your neighbors have been using them for years.” Needless to say I got a nurse cow and raised that calf because I had too much invested in her and besides she had the potential to have bigger horns than her mama.

So, time rocked long, like it does, and I bred the cow to a \$20,000 bull this time – on the third try. (He had tremendous horns and great color.) I figured the trouble must have been that the first bull wasn’t her equal. The next summer, she had another heifer calf with me and Doc just pulling this one. The nurse cow didn’t seem to mind raising her own calf and somebody else’s at the same time, so I didn’t feel too bad about the whole deal. After all I had managed to raise two heifer calves out of my \$20,000 cow in just short of three years. They both had tremendous horn and great color and should bring a fortune at the sales; and Wade and T.E. didn’t mind (too much) learning to use a calf-puller to help with future problems – and just think, in a few more years I’d have a whole herd of cows with tremendous horns and great color plus

another herd of great nurse cows. I could open up a Holstein dairy to make a little money to help pay the feed bill.

## **“Tongue in Cheek”**

Well, I hope this hasn't offended anyone because I never intentionally offend anyone. You all know that this is written sort of tongue-in-cheek, but at the same time it is a story that has a few points in it that I don't want to lose sight of. I hope you can see them too.

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