

Why Cattle Jump

By

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In the "Herald" of the 11th of April there was a very interesting account of droving large mobs of cattle through the Murrnaji scrub on the way to the southern markets and tells how one drover lost 570 head of his cattle when the mob stampeded at night, or what we old drovers call "jumping".

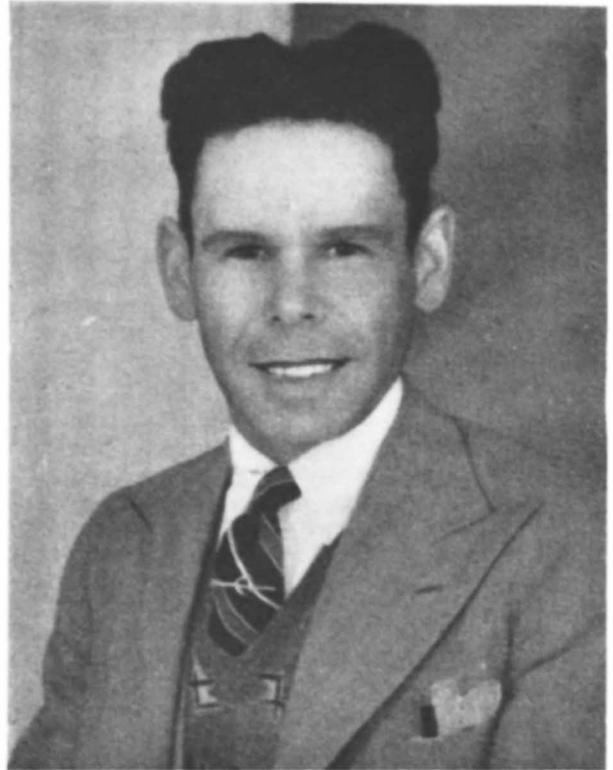
Every calling has its dangers, and stampeding is the danger of a drovers life.

Nearly sixty years ago I grew up with the old time drovers on the Birdsville track. That was in the days, when there were no papers or wireless and the old timers had to sit around the camp fire and talk about, droving, horses, the blacks, why cattle jump and other bush topics. They used to take a great pride in delivering their mob in good condition, and never having any losses, and they would say of another drover, "He is a good man. He knows his job. He never loses any cattle," for although it can not always be avoided, it was considered in those days a disgrace to lose cattle. I remember hearing about drover Joe Clark who in the 90's just before my time, had a big smash on the Birdsville track and lost all his mob in a terrific dust storm.

I know Mountejinni (proper aborigine name Neatijinni) and the Murrnaji scrub. Some years ago I was on my way to visit Wave Hill station and I camped the night with a drover at the western end of the Murrnaji scrub, and I told him, "When your cattle get into the scrub, they will jump." When he asked why, I told him, "Those young fellows are putting the cattle on to camp too early. They are swishing their tails, which is a sure sign, that they are discontented." Droving cattle must not be put on to camp before at least an hour after dark, and then let them just crawl up to the fire and lie down with grunts and snorts of satisfaction.

I then went on to Wave Hill, stayed there a couple of days, and then returned with Mr. MacFarlane the travelling manager for Vestey's. When we entered the dense Murrnaji scrub, we saw stray cattle every where. It was as I said, the cattle jumped and out of 1250 cattle, the drover lost 500.

Jumping cattle is generally due to inexperienced or faulty droving. Cattle can be very temperamental if they are not properly in and weaned on the station where they were bred. Then never camp cattle on an old cattle camp. They can not lie down in comfort, where there is other cattle dung. Get them used to the human voice. Bawl out at them. Aborigines make splendid drovers for they corroborate to the cattle, and cattle are very tractable to the human voice. A drover



Mr. Frederick A. Skinner, of Through Street, Grafton, whose interesting article appeared in last month's issue of Dawn

is the same as the captain of a ship, he must know how to handle his crew and not lose any cattle. I have helped to drive cattle on the Birdsville track 90 miles without water.

NAMBUCCA NEWS

Three girls from Nambucca Heads recently took up positions in Sydney. They are Joy Edwards, Janice Buchanan and Marie Edwards. Good reports are coming home from them.

Hospitals

Friends of Mr. Lamberth Whaddy, of Nambucca Heads, will be pleased to know the old gentleman (88), is about again after a long sojourn at Macksville Hospital. He is confined to a wheelchair but is very happy to be home once more.

Sport

Football is on again. Hector Edwards and Richard Combo, of Nambucca, are doing well and were both selected in a Group Trial, played at Coff's Harbour, one Sunday recently.

Teaching Changes

Mrs. D. St. John has almost completed one term at Bellwood School. She filled the vacancy left by Mr. R. Blackwell, who was transferred to Nana Glen.