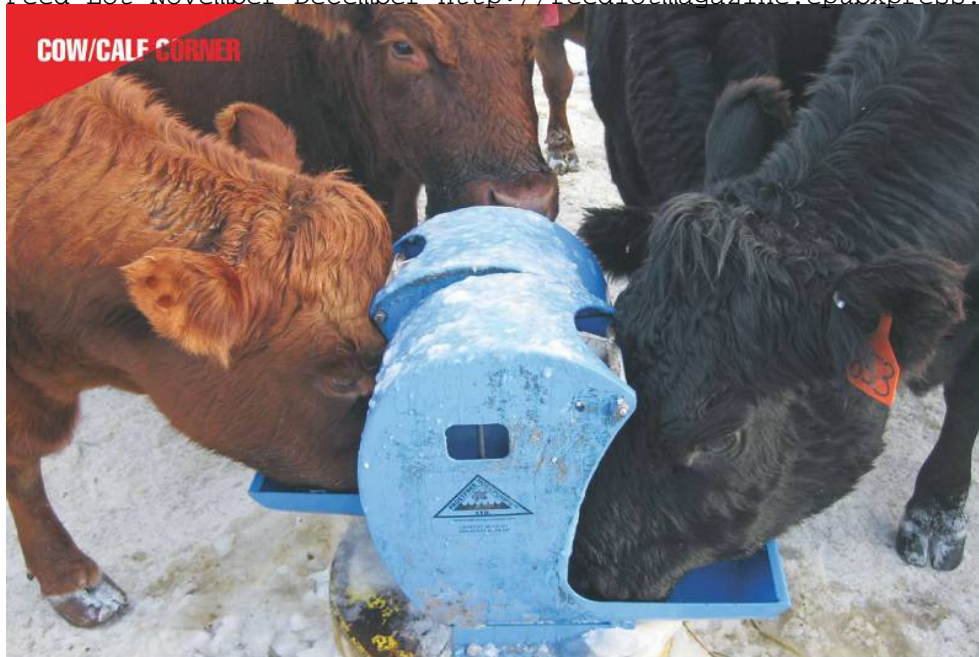


COW/CALF CORNER



Nose-pump Allows Cattle to Water Themselves

BY HEATHER SMITH THOMAS

A simple, innovative water system solves cold weather problems

and allows stockmen to keep cattle out of ponds and streams. Jim Anderson, a rancher at Rimbey,

Alberta, came up with an idea for cattle to pump their own water. His invention is a piston pump, like the old-fashioned hand pump. He modified it so cattle could use their nose to push a lever—raising and lowering the piston in a cylinder just as a handle used to do. The 3-inch cylinder is down inside a vertical culvert that captures enough warmth from the ground to keep it from freezing, even at 40 below zero.

Cows drink from a small, enclosed basin atop the vertical culvert (2 feet of which is above ground). At the back of the basin is the lever, pushed by the cow's nose. Two or 3 nose-pumps can be situated on the same culvert, enabling more cows to drink at once.

"Some ranchers use large pipes, but the typical installation is a road culvert at least 24-inch diameter, set in the ground at least 20 feet. The bigger and deeper the pipe, the more geothermal heat you capture," explains Anderson.



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The water source can be a well (if water level rises up to 50 feet or less from the ground surface), spring-fed buried collection tank, or pond/dugout. Many stockman utilize water from a fenced-off pond, piping it horizontally underground to the bottom of the vertical culvert. This keeps cattle out of the pond and provides frost-free, clean water.

Mike Possenroth, who runs 200 cows near Bentley, Alberta, was the first to install a nose-pump drawing water from a dugout, 10 years ago. He put it 50 feet from the fenced-off dugout. "We dug the hole for the culvert with a backhoe and had the water line hooked to the culvert," says Possenroth. "We went toward the dugout, laying pipe in the trench and backfilling as we went. As the backhoe made the last swipe, we flopped the pipe into the water and buried it." Water immediately filled the pipe in the culvert up to

the same level as the water surface in the dugout.

"Many people use dugouts now, putting the trench and pipeline in when they make the dugout, before it fills with water. Then you have time to set the pipe exactly how you want it," explains Possenroth.

"Ours fills with runoff, collecting from hills around it. Fenced off from the cows, the grass is tall on the banks and works as a filter system. It's a good way to always have fresh, clean water. Nose-pumps don't need electricity and are cheaper than solar panels and more trouble-free," he says. He uses the pump to water 150 cows during winter.

Somner Roberts put in a nose-pump eight years ago for his cattle near Swanville, Maine—where winter water was often a challenge. "We dug a well with a backhoe and put a culvert in. The cows learned to use the pump very quickly," says Roberts.

David Woodworth, a rancher near Melita, Manitoba, says the first year he put his pump in, he had heifers in that pasture and spent part of a day teaching them about it. "When they'd come to drink I filled the trough and let the lever come against their nose. They soon realized that's where the water came from. That winter, when I had 130 cows watering on it, I never went close to them. There were some in that group that already knew how to use it and they showed the others."

He really likes the pumps because you don't have to depend on electricity, wind, or sunshine for solar power. "The only problem we've had is if it's really cold and windy, because ours is out in the open. Sometimes the top part freezes up. If that happens, all I have to do is whack it with a rubber mallet, scoop the ice out (which takes about 5 seconds) and it's good to go again." ♦

Slate Creek Farms

With United Producers on his side, farmer defies the odds, keeps dreams alive.



L-R: Nolan, Herb, Leah, Donna and Megan Lottes



"I've been told at least ten times over the years that I wasn't going to make it in this business," said Herb Lottes, owner and operator of Slate Creek Farms.

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