

# BACK AT THE RANCH

## The Snow Has Been Flying at the TRM Ranch



**Robert K. Peebles**

MANAGER  
Theodore Roosevelt  
Memorial Ranch

GAZING OUT OF MY PICTURE WINDOWS, THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN FRONT IS ONCE AGAIN BLANKETED WITH A NEW SNOW. THIS IS ABOUT THE FIFTH SNOW STORM THIS FALL... THE FIRST STORM USHERED ITSELF IN ON SEPTEMBER 19, JUST TWO DAYS AFTER THE BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB'S SEPTEMBER MEETING AT THE THEODORE ROOSEVELT MEMORIAL RANCH. THOSE CLUB MEMBERS SLEEPING IN TEEPEES MISSED A REAL TREAT - SEVEN INCHES OF WET SNOW! HIGH WINDS (125 MILES PER HOUR PLUS) HAVE ALSO RAMPAGED ALONG THE FRONT THIS FALL AND THOSE SAME TEEPEES WERE LITERALLY RIPPED TO SHREDS.

The T bar D calves have been contracted and shipped to feeders in Iowa and weighed approximately 600 pounds straight through - steers and heifers. These weights are off somewhat from previous years for a couple of reasons. First, the grass was a little "washy" (low protein content) due to the extraordinary amount

some older cows whose calf weights are beginning to drop. We hope to pick up some more young cattle this fall - culling away some more of those older cows. It takes about a year for these new cattle to become acclimated to the TRM Ranch and the Rocky Mountain Front. These new cattle have performed well and will form the base of our cows as we gradually expand the TRM Ranch cattle herd to maximum numbers. Integrating cattle management practices with wildlife and habitat concepts will prove to be a delicate balance as the TRM Ranch explores new meanings to the term "range capacity."

This spring was characterized by flooding and heavy rains. Extensive damage to bridge crossings, fords, fences and ditches exacted heavy costs to the TRM Ranch budget. This, factored in with an ailing cattle market, makes ranching financially difficult along the Front this year; and

no matter how good things look, Montana always finds a way to keep you in line. Rain soaked hay meadows prevented a lot of harvesting and that, coupled with three summer wind storms of 95 miles per hour plus, reduced the total harvest by 85 to 90 tons. Despite these set backs, the TRM Ranch was still able to put up over 800 tons of hay for the upcoming winter.

On the wildlife side of things, the TRM Ranch has no difficulty staying busy. In early September, local youths from the area, along with a Trinity Lutheran Church group from Choteau and the Bob Peebles and Lisa Flowers families teamed up to build a Watchable Wildlife trail for the public. The trail travels into the heart of the TRM Ranch to a prominent point overlooking the Rocky Mountain Front. With the majority of the work out of the way, the trail will open this next spring. The kids worked diligently to complete the trail and also participated in a conservation poster contest. Their efforts were rewarded with ribbons and Boone and Crockett lapel pins.

Hunting season has also arrived, but has had a slow start. The elk herd has remained greatly scattered across the mountains and foothills and are proving to be worthy adversaries. And outside of a few resident mule deer, the main wintering herd has yet to migrate out of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. Many of the trophy deer choose to remain high for as long as possible, before driving winds, cold temperatures and excessive snow depths force them down onto the TRM Ranch and surrounding areas. Our later hunters will benefit from that fact this year. A follow up on the 1995 hunting season will be in the next issue.



BOB PEEBLES' SONS, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, COLE, CHAD AND MATT, MOVING T BAR D CATTLE TO NEW SPRING PASTURE.

of spring and summer rains (amounts doubling the annual rainfall by June 30). Secondly, the TRM Ranch had a lot of first calf heifers this year, whose calves weighed a little light and also

this cattle trend may well continue into next year.

As usual, we contracted our haying this year and due to the excessive precipitation, we had a lot of pasture grass and hay. However,