



Curious cattle line up to view the "whirlybird wrangler" that has just rounded them up.

Photo Courtesy Louis Hejtmanek, Texas Agriculture magazine.

HELICOPTERS DISPLACING COWBOYS

by Doug Sorenson

New-Style "Pinto" For Punchin' Cattle

The horseback-riding cowboy of the western ranges is being displaced by a new-style "pinto" for punchin' cattle — the modern helicopter.

No longer is it efficient for a group of cowhands to ride out through sage and mesquite brush to round up cattle. It makes more sense to board a "whirly bird" and cruise above the trees and hills where you can get a full view of everything on the ground.

Custom helicopter roundups have blossomed into a booming, full-time business for Aubrey Lange of San Angelo, Texas. Ranchers hire him to find and herd cattle from the air.

Lange guarantees 95% roundup of any livestock in a fraction of the time cowboys could do it. From the air, it's almost impossible for an animal to hide. The aircraft usually produces enough noise and commotion to move animals to penning areas, but Lange has his 'copter equipped with a siren and loudspeaker for any extra prodding and cajoling the cattle may need.

Besides the time saved in a helicopter roundup, there is the added benefit of less shrinkage of the cattle which are under less stress than in a conventional roundup.

Lange charges right at \$145 per hour for a helicopter roundup. That may sound pretty steep, until you consider how much you would have to pay several cowboys for perhaps a day's work. In a recent roundup, for example, Lange covered 12,000 acres and rounded up 900 head in 5½ hrs. That figures out to less than a dollar a head.

Lange also uses his helicopter to round up sheep, goats and horses, to make wildlife counts, and to spot forest or grass fires.



Rancher Vic Choate, right, coaxes cattle along with a siren and loudspeaker. Aubrey Lange, left, is at controls of the Cattlecopter.

Rancher Tommy Hayre, of Sheffield, Texas, recently used Lange's service to make a count of deer and wild turkeys in his area. "Lange flew 8,000 acres in 35 minutes," he says. "We figured we have a population of 30 deer per section, and we're pretty sure we found them all."

Hayre uses Lange's helicopter service regularly to round up his sheep and goats, and he is completely sold on doing it this way. "The hardest problem I've had," he says, "is to convince the cowboys that the helicopter can do a better job."

Some ranchers now own their own helicopters to do this kind of work, but it generally is not profitable for a private owner when you consider the six-figure cost of an aircraft which can cost \$25,000 just to overhaul.

So far, Lange has had all the business he can handle in west Texas where he's located. "But," he says, "I have had many calls to go out of state."

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Lange Helicopter, 3817 Honeysuckle St., San Angelo, Texas 76901 (ph 915 949-5056).

Slick Way To Seal Silos

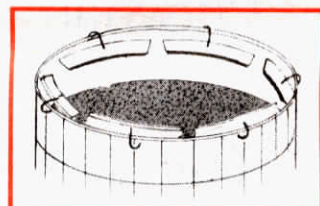
How much spoiled silage did you have to throw away the last time you opened your upright silos?

If there was any spoilage at all, chances are it could have been prevented with Silo Cap Holders, a simple but effective way to seal upright silos. Designed and manufactured by Roy Bilyeu, Mason City, Iowa, the Holders are concrete slabs reinforced with steel rods. Each slab or Holder is 3 ft. long, 6 in. wide, 1 in. thick and curved to fit against the silo wall. As soon as you've finished filling the silo, you cover it with plastic, then lay the 3 ft. long slabs end to end along the inside wall to hold the plastic in place. As the silage settles, the concrete slabs settle with it to retain the air tight seal. The bottom edges of each slab are rounded so they don't tear the plastic as they settle with the silage.

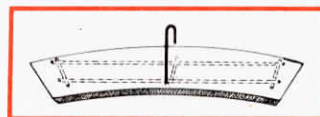
When you get ready to open the silo, you simply lift off the slabs and hang them on the top edge of the silo. Each slab has a built-in hook about 10 in. long which makes it self-storing along the top edge of the silo where it's out of the way and doesn't interfere with the silo unloader.

"The slabs weigh about 30 lbs. so they're relatively easy to pick up and hang when you get ready to open the silo," explains Bilyeu.

Bilyeu notes that, "it doesn't work to fill the silo to within a few feet of the top, cover it over with plastic, and then blow a load or two of wet silage on top of the plastic to hold it down. The problem with this commonly-used system is that silage on top of



Individual slabs are equipped with hooks for hanging on edge of silo when silo is opened. Slabs are 3 ft. long, 6 in. wide.



the plastic eventually dries out and, as the silage column settles, there is nothing to hold the ends of the plastic down. Air gets in underneath to cause spoilage. This doesn't happen with the concrete Holders. They hold the plastic cap in place, and keep it tight as the silage settles. We recommend using 6 mil plastic," Bilyeu explains.

Concrete Holders for silos up to 16 ft. in dia. are 3 ft. long and sell for right at \$10 ea. A set of 10 to go around the inside wall of the silo runs right at \$100. Slightly larger Holders are available for silos ranging from 18 to 24 ft. in dia.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Roy Bilyeu, 20 Ninth St., Box 363, Mason City, Iowa 50401 (ph 515 424-4611).