

## ON LOOKING INTO A PET COW'S EYE

Have you ever looked into your pet cow's eyes as a mother cow watches over her calf in the pasture? I mean really looked. Looked into the very depths of her soul, and tried to understand the wisdom that those eyes, and the mind behind them, possessed? Have you tried to understand the tranquillity expressed by those eyes, or the concern for her calf, or seen the quick change from calm to frantic concern when her offspring appears to be in danger?

I often recall events of my childhood that leaves me with great confidence in the subconscious. Now that I have returned to school, after an absence of more than fifty years, and the wheels of my mind are in better working order than ever before, I'm in disbelief at the childhood memories that return.

With all this in mind, I would like to tell you about an experience I recalled the other day, about our pet cow on the farm, where I grew up, at Venosta, Quebec. Looking back now, I think it has to be one of the more memorable experiences of my life.

Brindle, our pet cow was like that. I used to feel that I could follow her anywhere into the bush, and feel no fear of the denizens of the forests. She seldom gave me the impression that she minded me following her. As a matter of fact, I think she rather enjoyed having me tag along. Except at two times of the year. When she was about ready to calve, and again when the calf was



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taken away to be weaned.

When Brindle was about ready to have her calf, she would become very standoffish and devious, and seemed upset when I was around. Then she would disappear for a few days, and when she returned, her heavy laden milk bag, and newly sucked teats, gave clear indication that she had delivered her baby, and no doubt had hidden it securely in the woods.

This blessed event was over-shadowed by the inevitable. When Brindle's calf was removed to the barn to be weaned, it was a sad time for the three of us. Brindle would hang around the barn for several days, mooing for her calf, and the calf bleating in return. No matter how much I tried to console them, neither would have anything to do with me. We all felt just miserable, and at odds with the world.

Because of Brindle's unusual shrewdness, it was always a hectic search to find her calf before it became old enough, and wild enough to run like a

deer. If that happened, there would be a good chance that the chase would be long and difficult, and require the efforts of the entire family. Those who could run, of course. This capture had to be accomplished within a few days.

There were miles of crown land adjacent to our farm, and the fences were not up to scratch. Wolves and bears were plentiful. So you see the problem.

When a cow calved in the bush, she was uncannily shrewd in leading trailers away from the area. Our strategy was to keep her tied in the barn for a day, so that she would become so anxious for her calf, that she would make a beeline for it, when she was released. Some cows did. But not Brindle. No matter how well-hidden we thought we were, she sensed our presence. She could ignore her watchers for hours, grazing calmly, waiting for us to become tired of the game.

The near tragedy developed when, for some reason, the clan left to pick wild plums without me. The plum picking was one job that I didn't want to miss. I loved them raw, and besides strawberry picking, it was fun. Wild strawberry picking required that the picker get down on his or her knees, usually in the blazing sun, to look for the berries among the leaves. Wild plum picking was done under the shade of the trees. The bed sheets, that we spread on the ground, caught most of the plums, when we shook the tree violently. It was a simple matter then, to gather the fruit into a pile, and load them into flour sacks. *(To be continued )*