

Cara This is Cara at the Ashland Library. It is April 23, 2020, and we are calling Bill Broadie to find out how Covid 19 is affecting him and his business. Bill, do we have permission to record this?

Bill OK.

Cara Bill, how old are you?

Bill Oh, that's personal. 72.

Cara When did you first hear about the coronavirus?

Bill Oh, my goodness. I suppose it was in January sometime.

Cara What was your reaction then?

Bill Oh, like a lot of things. I didn't pay a lot of attention to it, just like it was another flu bug.

Cara Do you have children or family living in your home?

Bill No, I'm by myself.

Cara When did this virus first become real to you? When did you notice it?

Bill Oh, I suppose I first started taking it seriously when they put this "Everybody Stay at Home" deal on, you know, and not go anywhere, especially when they talked about this deal killing all us old folks.

Cara What changed in your life right away when they did the Stay at Home?

Bill I'm on the road quite a bit, not as much as a few years ago, but quite a bit. For me, in the last month, I've burned a half a tank of fuel. There's not a whole lot of money to spend when you just sit there at home, consequently I haven't been out with customers or staying in motel rooms or going to restaurants on the road, et cetera.

Cara What is your job? Why are you on the road so much?

Bill I'm in livestock video marketing, so we're out talking to customers clear across the state and Oklahoma, Colorado, Texas, going to Fort Worth every couple weeks for sales and so I travel a lot marketing cattle.

Cara Okay, what is your job or the situation right now, what's happening to the cattle market?

Bill Oh, it's dead right now. I mean, that there is guys whether it's stockers or feedlot people and all, their market has just fallen plumb out of bed. I would say that, depending on the category of cattle, thirty to fifty dollars a hundred under where we were three months ago.

Cara For people who don't deal with the cattle market, what kind of a monetary loss are we talking?

Bill I would say around \$50 to \$400 a head.

Cara Pure loss. What should an animal bring usually? What's he bringing now?

Bill We were selling feeder cattle in the mid to high \$1.40 range. So let's say 1.40 to 1.50 on most of the steers back at the turn of the year. Now that's down closer to a dollar just watching our... We could sell it just on the internet today and steers were bringing in a dollar to a dollar five, basically. So, that's per pound and consequently if you're talking an 800-pound steer and it's \$40 a hundred cheaper, well, that's \$320.

Cara What is the long-range impact of this for our local ranchers?

Bill Well, you know, it's hard to tell because we're backing beef up because the packing plants are getting people with the coronavirus and they're shutting some of them down, that slowed others down because they're working on half-staff.

So we're backing fat cattle up at a tremendous rate. I was talking to a background guy in Oklahoma two days ago, he said he had a feedlot manager tell him that he hadn't had a packer in his yard for four weeks. Well, those cattle that would have been ready four weeks ago, are now a hundred pounds heavier. So consequently, you're backing up and adding to our beef to the tune of several million pounds daily.

It's going to take a while to work through that, I think. This is a market very similar to the '73 to '75 markets when Nixon froze the price of beef and we all thought it was going to get better when he pulled the freeze off. We held cattle back and increased tonnage and it didn't get better for quite a while.

Cara Do you want to guess how long it'll take it to get better?

Bill I have no clue. There's so many variables out there. I think the administration in Washington is working very hard trying to get things back to normal, but you know there's so many things that vary. New York City, when are they going to reopen the restaurants to where people will go in there to order a steak?

You know, it's going to take a while to work through the inventory. The price of beef is going up daily, but the price of the cattle is going down bad. That's because they're not getting them processed out because of the sickness.

Cara For people who aren't connected with the cattle industry. What do you do with an animal that's already over finished? What do you do with him?

Bill They eventually cross their way through it. Hopefully, we get some inventory going out for the foreign markets, too. It's gonna take a while to eat our way through it. And how much is this going to change people's behavior? I mean, even if the risk of the coronavirus is over. What if people have changed their lifestyle? I don't know how it's going to affect it.

Cara Do you have a hope for when you think things might go back to normal or is that ever going to happen? Do we have a new normal?

Bill I'm thinking it will be several years before we get back to somewhat normal. The livestock business is never be totally normal anyway, there's so many things that can affect it one way or the other. If we can get this to where people can get out and move around, I think we'll have a... Each state's governor has jurisdiction over the stay-at-home deal, but when we start seeing people get out in New York City or in Chicago and in the restaurants.

And we'll get the packing plants operating at normal speed. It's not just the cattle, it's the hogs backing up inventory too.

Cara I heard they were gassing at some of the hog production places.

Bill Yeah. The major hog plants are completely down. We can feed America if we just get the packing plants where they're operating and getting it out there.

Cara On a totally another note, all of your children live at least several hours away. Correct?

Bill Yes.

Cara So you're not getting to visit with grandkids or do anything fun either?

Bill Well, there's cell phones and Facetime. In fact, I got a new great-grandson yesterday.

Cara Congratulations!

Bill I got pictures of him on my phone already!

Cara Is that our new normal? We'll get to know people on screen?

Bill For a lot of people, not for me, but I've had to learn some of it.

Cara OK, Bill, before I let you go. Is there anything you wish Joe Blow down the street knew about what's going on here? Is there anything you wish that other people understood about how this is affecting the cattle market?

Bill I don't think anybody totally understands what Covid's going to do. I worry about what the market's doing to do. I've been in that place when your equity is gone and you're at the mercy of the markets and the banks. Our hometown banks are pretty good, but they're going to have pressure on them too. So most of them are just trying to talk to customers, because I know they're scared too. You've got your whole life in front of you as far as what you worked for. How many years have we got if it stays like this?

Yes. Bill, thank you for taking the time to talk with me. We'll call you when it's all over and see how it fell together.