

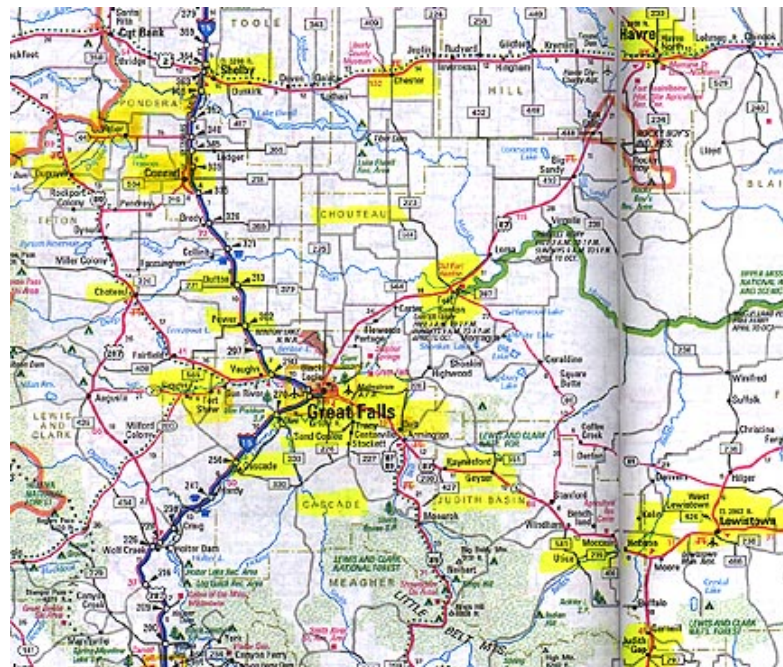


Mystery Stalks The Prairie

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Chapter 2

Case of the Missing Calf



Yellow indicates the towns, counties and areas affected by animal mutilations, unidentified helicopters and mysterious aerial craft during 1974 to 1976. Twenty-seven years later, in 2001 to 2002, Pondera County and surrounding region experienced more than a

dozen animal mutilations associated with unidentified lights and other high strangeness.

See [Earthfiles 08/18/01](#).

Earthfiles, news category.

Evidence gained in investigating a number of mutilations, including the Shetland pony, seemed to indicate that the animals were tranquilized or anesthetized (but not killed) before they were mutilated. A veterinarian's theory that the drug Ketaset could have been used for this purpose greatly interested investigating officers.

Deputies Experiment With Cattle Tranquilizer

The lawmen decided to perform an experiment to observe the effects of Ketaset

on a calf. A Teton County rancher, who was interested in seeing the mutilations solved, offered to donate a crippled steer calf for the experiment. A veterinarian conducted the experiment with lawmen from both Teton and Cascade Counties observing.

The 250-pound calf was initially injected with 5cc of Ketaset. Seven and a half minutes later, the calf still appeared normal. So, another 10cc of Ketaset was injected. Within three and a half minutes, the calf was down on the ground. By the time four minutes had passed, the calf's heartbeat had increased from 60 to 120 beats per minute. During the rapid heartbeat, the veterinarian inserted a 12 gauge needle in the calf's jugular vein and the blood pumped out rapidly and regularly.

The calf's heartbeat slowed to 90 within 12 1/2 minutes and after 21 minutes had passed, the calf was on its feet. Twenty-eight and a half minutes after injection of Ketaset, the calf was no longer under the influence of the drug. The calf was later returned to its owner.

Those witnessing the experiment agreed that during the period of time when the calf was rendered unconscious by the drug, it was unable to resist anything that was done to it. The experiment proved that Ketaset could be used to quickly render an animal helpless and that it increased the heartbeat which reduced the time needed to remove the animal's blood.

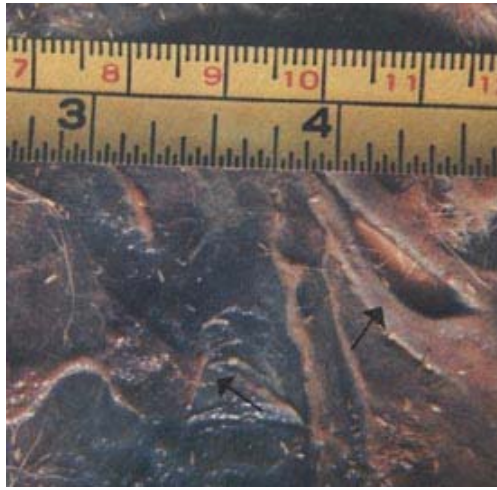
The experiment was but a part of the intensive efforts being made by law officers all over north-central Montana to solve the mysterious mutilations. With the advent of August, the number of mutilations increased considerably and at times, the officers were hard-pressed to follow up on all reports.

Three Mutilated Cattle On One Night

Pete Howard, Sheriff of Teton County, may have set some sort of record when he investigated reports of three mutilations in one night. The first report involved a 12-day-old heifer calf that had appeared to be in good health two days earlier when seen by the rancher. The calf was found in an isolated area lying on a grassy hillside about 50 yards from a stock pond. Sheriff Howard commented on the fact that there seemed to be water nearby in most mutilation cases.

This particular incident was one of the few in which tracks were found in the area. A set of visible tire tracks in the grass indicated a vehicle had come down from the top of the hill, stopped on a small bench above the calf, and had later turned around and gone back up the hill. However, there were no tracks visible in the immediate area of the calf's carcass.

There was no indication of a struggle and the investigating officers were unable to find any blood in the area. When the post mortem was done by a local veterinarian, he found the body cavity almost completely void of blood. Even the heart had very little blood in it. The vulva and rectum had been removed from the body, along with a piece of hide about one foot in diameter. Also missing were some of the internal organs, including the bladder.



Puncture wounds like these in the jugular vein of the animal have been found in a number of mutilation cases. The theory has been advanced that a salt solution to facilitate blood removal was injected in the one opening while the blood was pumped from the other. Photograph © 1975 by Cascade County Sheriff's Office.

Although the mother cow was in the area when lawmen arrived, she made no effort to go near the dead calf, nor would other cattle in the herd go near it.

After delivering the calf carcass to the veterinarian for autopsy, Sheriff Howard asked Cascade County Deputies Captain Keith Wolverton, Ken Anderson and Arne Sand to join him and assist with the investigation of the other two mutilated calves.

Those two dead calves had been reported by a Fairfield area rancher. The area where they were found was quite remote with no houses nearby. As in the previous case, there was a pond of water nearby. It appeared that one of the calves had dropped into the water and had been dragged back away from the water about 12 or 14 feet. The sheriff's report stated: "It appeared that possibly two people had dragged the animal as there were no hesitation marks in the skid path as would likely be present if one person had dragged it."

This calf was a Black Angus heifer about four months old. It was missing the tip of its left ear, the vaginal and rectal areas had been removed, along with the tail. As noted in a number of mutilations, the animal's eyes protruded extensively.

The second calf, a five-month-old Hereford heifer, had a large diagonal incision under the left rib section near the flank. The intestines were protruding from the wound through which the female reproductive organs had been removed.



The incision in the side of this mutilated calf is the type used to perform Caesareans on cows which cause lawmen to consider the possibility that those doing the mutilations were familiar with anatomy and surgical procedures. The calf's female organs had been removed and the intestines were protruding from the wound.

Again, the tip of the left ear was missing. The incision in the calf's side was the kind usually made when performing a Caesarean on a cow to deliver a calf, giving further credibility to the theory that whoever was doing the mutilations was familiar with anatomy and surgical procedures. The carcasses of the two calves were found about twelve feet apart.

The owner said when he first viewed the dead calves, he noted that the herd from which they came was watering at the pond, but in an area they normally did not use. He said the cattle appeared to be quite listless. But, shortly after the officers arrived, the cattle spooked and ran off.

A neighbor reported seeing a car drive through the herd a few nights earlier. Officers speculated about the possibility that the animals were selected before mutilation.

Just one week after officers investigated the three calf mutilations in Teton County, the Cascade County Sheriff's Office received two calls one day and another on the ensuing day regarding cattle mutilations in the county. Each of the three incidents had unusual circumstances not encountered earlier and these added to the mystery.

First, a unique mutilation method was revealed in an investigation north of Cascade involving a bull calf. The rancher found the dead calf while checking cattle on top of a high butte. The calf was lying on its left side about forty feet from a stock tank. Again, water was near the mutilation site. The right hind leg of the calf had been removed in a circular cut that appeared to be made with a sharp instrument. The cut went completely through the leg bone just below the hip socket. Even though the bone was severed, investigating officers could find no trace of bone dust. The circular cut extended toward the midsection, exposing the stomach area. All of the sex organs had been removed, including the testicles, but the empty scrotum was still intact.



Lawmen encountered something different when they examined this mutilated calf, as the hind leg had been removed in a cut that went through the bone as well as the flesh just below the hip socket. Even though the bone was severed, there was no bone dust.

When officers turned over the dead calf, they found that one of the calf's organs had been removed and the calf laid on top of it, smashing it. Photograph © 1975 Cascade County Sheriff's Office.

In turning over the calf, officers found one of its internal organs mashed beneath its left front quarter. Officers agreed the organ had to have been removed first, placed on the ground and the calf turned over on top of it. Although the entire area was checked, no footprints or other evidence were found. Five nights earlier, a car had been observed at 7:30 p.m. and at 11:50 p.m. on the approach from the main county road. The top of the butte may also be reached by climbing a pipeline drainage from a pump house 600 feet below to the top of the butte.

The absence of tracks baffled officers when they investigated another reported mutilation the same week near Belt. Few tracks have ever been found at mutilation sites, but this time it was an even greater mystery because the dead cow was found in a plowed field.

Mutilation In Plowed Field, But Still No Tracks

A theory had been advanced earlier that whoever was mutilating stood on a sheet of cardboard to avoid leaving tracks. However, in this case, the use of cardboard as well as footprints or vehicle tracks would have pressed down the furrows of loose soil. The cow was found three-quarters of a mile from the fence line and road.

When the rancher first found his cow, he noticed that one ear was missing. After dragging her out of the field, he noticed that the two teats on the right side had been cut off and the rectal area removed, obviously with a very sharp instrument. It was at this point he called the sheriff's office.



This mutilated cow was found in a plowed field three quarters of a mile from the fence line, but there were no tracks in the area. The rectal tissue had been removed.

Later examination showed that the cow had an incision underneath the front leg. Sgt. Les Bobier, one of the investigating deputies, cleaned the area and opened

the wound. But no special significance was given to it until months later when some deputies from Idaho were visiting the Cascade County Sheriff's Department. In looking at the department's photos of mutilations, one of the Idaho deputies remarked about this cow's incision. He said there had been a similar wound in a mutilated cow his department had examined. They had called in a veterinarian to do an autopsy and the veterinarian inserted an instrument into the wound and discovered that the opening went all the way to the heart.



This wound underneath the front leg in the mutilated cow did not hold special significance at the time of the Montana investigation.

Months later some deputies from Idaho remarked that they had found a similar wound in a mutilated cow in their region and a veterinarian had discovered the wound went all the way to the heart. Photograph © 1975 by Cascade County Sheriff's Office.

Another mutilation report was received the same day, August 14, 1975, from another rancher in the Belt area. Incidentally, this date was the exact first anniversary of the first mutilation report received by the Cascade County Sheriff's Office.

A writer of "who done it" stories might have dubbed this incident, *The Mystery of the Missing Calf*. In this instance, the rancher found his mutilated Hereford cow in a locked pasture about one-half mile from the county road. Her calf, born earlier in the spring, was missing. Lawmen were unable to find any tracks except those made by the cattle. At the time of this writing, the calf has not been found.

This cow mutilation differed from the other cases because the reproductive organs and teats were not removed. The cow's left ear, tongue and some hide were missing. There was an attempt to skin the jaw. Examination showed that the gland behind the left ear had been removed.

The fact that there were no tracks puzzled the officers. The gate to the pasture was locked and anyone wanting to reach the cow would have had to walk about

a half mile from the county road after crossing the fence; unless a helicopter or some other air or space vehicle was used - a theory which has been considered.

Although this was Cascade County's first case in which a calf was missing, Chouteau County had one similar incident. It was reported earlier in the year on March 24, and was investigated by Deputy Robert Blades, another deputy and a livestock inspector. In that case, it was necessary for the rancher to take the officers to the scene in a four-wheel-drive vehicle because of muddy conditions near the Missouri River. The rancher told officers he had discovered one of his cows was missing that morning and that the rest of the cattle seemed to be very nervous and jumpy.

A large heifer cow was found lying at the bottom of a coulee. Deputies could find no human footprints in the area and they could not find any vehicle tracks, except those made by the rancher. There was blood and signs of a scuffle in a circle about ten yards wide around the carcass. The mutilation had apparently taken place only a short time before, as the carcass was still warm and steaming where the blood was draining out. The udder bag was removed by a very smooth incision and the cow's intestines and internal organs were hanging out from the rectal area. Dog or coyote tracks were found about 20 yards and farther from the carcass, but not closer.

In searching the area, the officers came across a newborn calf that had been mutilated, but was still alive. Its tongue and one lip had been removed.



This days old calf was found mutilated, but still alive.
Its tongue and one lip had been removed.
Photograph © 1975 by Cascade County Sheriff's Office.

The mutilated calf did not belong to the mutilated heifer, according to the rancher's records, but the mutilated heifer's calf, born two days earlier, was missing and it had a white face. The mutilated calf was brown.

The entire area was searched for the missing calf, but it was not found. However, four days later, it mysteriously reappeared in the same pasture lying on a snow

bank. It was barely alive, but had *not* been mutilated.

The rancher later told authorities that four of his calves were born dead following the incident, although his cows had not had stillborns before. He said he put the four stillborn calves in a ravine and they were immediately eaten by predators. However, the mutilated cow and calf were not touched by predators and finally deteriorated due to the elements.



This is Square Butte north of Cascade where a mutilated calf was found on top of the butte. The area would have to be reached either by a county road or by climbing a drainage that went from a pipeline at the top of the butte to a pump house 500 feet below. Although the area was carefully searched, no footprints or tire tracks were found. Photograph © 1975 by Cascade County Sheriff's Office.

Another unusual aspect of the case surfaced when tracks resembling those made by a horse were found in one part of the fenced pasture, but the rancher stated there had been no horses in the pasture for 20 years.

To be continued in **Chapter 3 - Appeal Made for Public's Help**

Credits

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