

Cow Culture

Cowman Discovers Nature's Treatment for Pasture

Staff Report

Cowography would be a term in need of invention if not for the Elko, Nevada, Cowboy Poetry Gathering each year. In a real sense, cowographers have been around a long time.

They *see* what they look at. Wesley Ervasti is a legendary cowman, age 76, associated with the Bow Tie Ranch near Sebeka, Minnesota.

Over his many years in farming, Ervasti noted those bare spots on a cow's nostrils. A healthy animal always has there what appear to be beads of sweat. Except for Wesley Ervasti, no one has been curious enough to ask the question, "What is that exudate?" Professors and experts had no answer.

Ervasti figured it was the most wonderful culture ever devised by nature. When a cow mows off grass or eats hay from a bail, she cannot avoid leaving some of the culture behind. This culture helps the animal with digestion.

Noted Ervasti, "Mother Nature made a deal with the cow. She said, *I'll provide you plenty of grass, but you have to give something back. Every bite you take, you will leave this culture in the forage and in the soil.*"

Nature did not intend that there should be a piece of soil tended only by old iron, the plow or cultivator. Such instruments do not bestow the culture a cow provides via her bartered exchange for grass.

Ervasti used the above information on his ranch. The very same culture, he found, was evident in buttermilk. The same culture helps a cow with her own digestion, and it helps the soil keep its life-factor.

A farmer's pragmatic observations do not achieve "scientific" status when scientists ignore nature's hints. There are no present answers as to what this bovine culture does for the soil. Ervasti has his suggestions, just the same.

He bought the original 160 acres from his folks at age 17. As neighboring farms



Aerial view of the Bow Tie Ranch, Sebeka, Minnesota, where grass is blessed by a cow's own culture, each paddock taking a two-year term in rotation in receiving a bovine benediction.

came up for sale, they were rundown in fertility, and the sale price was almost always cheap. Ervasti made his acquisitions, fenced off the plots into 40 acres each, and returned row-crop acres to pasture. After grazing the weeds and forage for a couple of years, and after manuring the ground, the rejuvenated soil was returned to rotation.

"The cows put on their culture for me," the cowman said, "and they seeded the soil with their manure."

Grass is more than the "forgiveness of nature," as Kansas Senator John J. Ingalls put it. It is nature refined mechanism for delivering micronutrients to the animal in a size suitable for rapid assimilation.

Grass accepts nutrients in a size best described as "beyond the ion," meaning

that its miniscule entry through root hairs and leaf stomata fence out particles considered small in the mineral box.

One trace mineral should illustrate the point. Few soils have even a trace of cobalt. The grass called corn in its hybrid form does not pick up cobalt, or other trace minerals.

Shortly after hybrids invaded the scene, the old Armour's Institute of Research, Chicago, using 4,000 samples, compared Krug OP corn to the new-fangled hybrids and found the hybrids short of nine minerals. The hybrid failed to pick up cobalt and the other basic traces. Both varieties had the same chance to pick up a balanced ration.

This routine failure to pick up cobalt was noted in every case. The core of Vitamin B₁₂ is cobalt. Ira Allison, M.D., Springfield, Missouri, found that a lack of cobalt was implicated as a cause of brucellosis (Bang's disease) and its human

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Wesley Ervasti



Ervasti's observations revealed that the exudate around a cow's nostrils is an amazing cultural treatment for soil and forage.

variant, undulant fever. Cobalt, in fact, turned out to be part of the cure.

Good soil, soil "cultured" by cows, delivers not only cobalt, but all the key traces, for which reason Ervasti hasn't had a disease problem year after year. Grass is the nutrition and grass is the cure.

At age 76, Ervasti has farmed for 60 years. His rotation was corn, a nurse crop of oats, alfalfa and grass, with hay cleaning the land for two years. Cattle would graze the next two years for maximum culture distribution. Corn would follow.

Yields were always fantastic. Although Ervasti has shared his findings with cattlemen, farmers and professors, few have embraced nature's mystery with the humble interest of this one farmer.

He made his suggestion to Dr. Jim Brinks of Colorado State University, an animal science specialist. Brinks agreed that there had to be a reason for that culture on a cow's nose. He turned the idea over to a botany specialist, who harvested this culture, diluted it with water, and sprayed it on potted plants. The usual treated and untreated plants anointed the greenhouse. There was a 50 percent increase in those treated with the cow culture.

Ervasti has 23 miles of fences for his rotation of crops and animals. Rotation is every six years, with two out of six years dedicated to the cow-culture treatment.

The idea of farming without livestock is seen by Ervasti as nonsense. "It runs against nature," he said.

After he recited the above report to *Acres U.S.A.*, the 76-year-old self-educated scholar-farmer admitted the last time he watched TV was when Kennedy was assassinated. Successful farming, he opined, depends on *seeing* what you look at, and reading — lots of good reading.

On balance, observation trumps the dilettante.

"Have you ever noticed how the cow goes to the woods — if available — to drop her calf? She paws back leaves and needles to expose forest soil. That's where she wants to calve. The calf eats soil if it has organic matter. This is to get minerals and nutrients. I bring buckets of soil to my cows. They eat it, exchanging their nose culture."

As the Bow Tie rancher related his story, *Acres U.S.A.* recalled anew the fact that sick cows do not have that telling culture for nature's exchange.

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