

Take photos of your cattle

Cattle rustler teaches farmer to get perfect registry pictures

BY JOYCE BUPP
Staff Correspondent

LINEBORO, Md. — The plot is a classic one of Grade B western movies.

Rustler sneaks under cover of darkness into cattle herd and makes away with animals...rustler gets caught...rustler gets suspended sentence, at the end of a rope tied to the nearest big tree.

The good guys generally win in cowboy movies. In real life, though, the Donald Baker family, Shaffer Mill Road, doesn't see it that way.

"The law protects the criminal," says a disgruntled Baker.

Baker, his wife Ruthetta, and their three daughters and a son, operate RayKnoll dairy farms, a uniquely located 145-acres of rolling farmland in two states and three counties. Perched on the Mason-Dixon border, the Baker's farm is in Pennsylvania's York County, and in both Carroll and Baltimore counties in Maryland.

Their dairy operation includes a herd of 90 Ayrshires and Holsteins, about three-quarters of the animals registered.

Early Thursday morning, August 30, 1979, a baby purebred Holstein calf was discovered missing from a hutch it shared with a pen mate near the milking barn. It was a damp, foggy day, and the Baker's figured the calf had crawled from the pen and wandered out to hide in tall grass nearby.

"But as soon as I walked into the barnyard, I could sense that something was wrong," Baker recalls. "The cows seemed terribly nervous and jumpy."

Then Baker spied truck

tracks in soft ground just outside the concrete exercise lot adjoining the milking parlor. The family finished up the morning milking and armed with DHIA papers, again ran the herd through the parlor, taking cattle roll call.

Two head were missing.

Betsy, a prized Ayrshire, just fresh and still showing signs of afterbirth, was a former 4-H project favorite. Patches, the Holstein, had freshened in June and was milking near the top of the herd.

"I couldn't have picked two better milking cows

from the herd to take myself," grimaces Baker, who agreed to share his story in the interest of livestock owners, especially those with registry certificates.

Calls went out to both the Maryland State Police and to

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Once the site of the local grain mill and the center of surrounding commerce, the Baker's RayKnoll farm sits at a crossroads off to the right, enabling their rustler to make a quick getaway in one of several directions through rolling hills and a maze of twisting country roads.



In spite of the theft of a calf from their hutches, Donald and Ruthetta Baker are convinced it's the best calf care system, especially with the telescoping wooden fronts they've custom built.



If only they could talk: Norma Jean Baker holds Patches the Holstein, and Donald is at the halter of Betsy the Ayrshire, the two registered milking

cows rustled from the family's Lineboro dairy farm in August, 1979.

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