

at will over extensive leases containing numerous gates that minimize the rustlers' task; his many duties take him to distant parts of the range, leaving his cattle unguarded and unprotected. Report of small losses may arouse the anger of the perpetrator; and anyone bearing such an owner ill-will could easily destroy part of the lease or feed stacks without being detected.

The police member should strive to gain the confidence of all; for in some instances the fact that the big owner neglects to mention small losses may deprive the policeman of valuable information—information that may be the means of cleaning up a case and catching the cattle thieves.

Then, too, acquisition of the ranchers' confidence may result in useful tips concerning other matters. For the rancher, wise to the ways of the range, may witness incidents that escape the attention of the policeman. The rancher may see an animal, or animals, in a field by themselves, or come across a particular animal in a strange herd, or notice certain persons riding back and forth in areas that are beyond their usual riding range. The ranch owner's suspicions are aroused and word is passed on to his friend, the policeman. Should, however, an investigator, who does not enjoy the confidence of the rancher, seek information, he will find his attempt to dig out the facts as hopeless as trying to dig out a badger.

Rustlers are the leeches of the cattle industry. Generally astute individuals, with holdings in their own right, they often plan for days before carrying out their depredations. They usually know the range intimately and learn beforehand everything concerning the ranch they intend to raid. It is well known that many rustlers have endeavoured to obtain brands in their own names very similar to the brands on the animals they mean to steal, hoping thereby to simplify the task of altering the brands on the coveted cattle.

Rustlers employ various methods to carry out their nefarious deeds,—re-branding appropriating slicks (young calves not yet branded), trucking the animals off the range, hazing them to distant corrals; or they may simply butcher them on the range.

On the other hand, the creatures may be slaughtered to sell to the local butcher, whose daily turnover is small and who is anxious to purchase stock—usually fat, dry cows—at a low price. This type of stealing is usually carried out with a light truck or old car. The animal is spotted, and butchered when the time is propitious, then the thief disposes of the offal in some dry wash by breaking the ground down over it; nothing remains but bloodstains and tire tracks. The sun's action rapidly erases the blood marks; the tire tracks will disappear if there be a wind and the prairie be dry.

Frequently, however, the tire tracks lead to the thief. A cast, taken where the tire tread is clear and defined, will point out the direction taken by the thief and may establish the time the theft occurred. In some instances a thorough check-up of the suspected butcher shop results in conviction. The type of beef and size of the bones will reveal to the conversant investigator the type of animal it was when alive. A close examination of the hide will often disclose the identity of the brand. Green hides that have been salted and rolled up can be studied without causing damage to the pelts. Roll out one hide with the hair to the ground and the flesh side up; roll out a second hide flesh side down on top of the first. In this way the salt is held in place, and the butcher cannot complain that he will have to re-salt the hide when the investigator has finished. While checking the hide, it is well to examine the flesh side as well as the hair side for indications of the brand.

When ranchers ship their cattle the policeman should make every effort to