Roundup Dos and Don’ts

Ranchers are inviting city folks to their brandings to educate them about our business. I applaud this move but realize that there’s never been any direction given as to how the townies are to conduct themselves. Until now, that is.

Here is a list of dos and don’ts on how to win friends and influence cowboys at the next branding.

DON’T buy a brand new pair of boots and a brand new cowboy hat and then wear them to a branding. Your feet will hurt and some jovial cowboy will fill your new hat to the brim with cow manure as a practical joke.

DON’T wear spurs with your Bermuda shorts either. DO wear a sensible pair of athletic shoes because you are going to be doing a lot of running away from mad cows who have had their babies temporarily kidnapped from them. You are also going to be dodging red hot branding irons, sharp needles and ropes that will feel like barbed wire running through your bare hands.

But DON’T wear gloves; the cowboys will think you’re a big sissy and the doctors in the emergency room will have a hard time finding your severed fingers amidst all the coagulated blood concentrated in the finger tips of your gloves.

DON’T ask for a Band-Aid or pain medication either. Suck it up. Make sure your medical insurance is paid up and that you are within two hours of a good hospital. And you might want to consider having a Medivac chopper standing by.

DON’T ask if you can brand, give shots or use the knife to turn the bull calves into steers. This is serious business and a rancher could lose money and respect if some dude in low shoes put

a brand on upside down, gave a shot that caused a bulbous growth or only removed half of a bull's manhood.

Your job is to work the ground crew, which means you get to tackle huge calves all day. DO try to lift with your back.

DON'T complain or expect thanks. This isn't a party or a place to network. There are no invitations, you don't have to RSVP and there isn't a reception where canapés and cocktails are served. Everyone works for free, plain and simple. After all ... this is the cow business. This isn't about you. DO come expecting to be exploited and abused.

DO leave home your attitude, boom box, cellphone, dogs, girlfriend or mistress, unless she makes great desserts, or is built like a fullback and can flip calves on their right side.

Especially DON'T bring a knucklehead horse. You aren't going to get to ride and rope anyway as there's barely enough calves to rope as it is for the real cowboys to get their fair share. DO bring donuts, preferably chocolate with sprinkles on them.

This isn't the Civil War where you can pay someone to take your place. If you aren't going to work, by all means DO feel free to stay home.

DON'T get all queasy and faint if you're forced to eat you're share of mountain oysters as part of your initiation, or if you happen to see severed body parts, blood and other body fluids. They probably belonged to a cowboy anyway.

It's called a branding because we brand our cattle. This is a branding, not Show and Tell, so DON'T take hidden videos and then put them on YouTube. Branding is a time-tested method of livestock identification, and it doesn't hurt the calves any more than those hideous tattoos you have all over your body.

DON’T expect any free beef to take home, or to be allowed to hunt on the ranch just because you gave a little free labor and broke your arm in three places.

Let the real hands wash up first and DON’T ask to use the bathroom in the house. Never use the disinfectant wipes your wife carries in her purse. At the barbecue afterwards, DON’T ask if they have chicken, sushi or a vegetarian entree.

DON’T be an idiot or sue anyone at the conclusion of the day’s activities.

If you follow all these rules the real cowboys might just let you wear a Stetson and Justin Ropers and buy all the beer at the county fair this summer.

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