

Dec 31, 2003

If you remember in our last episode we finally had everything home except one black heifer calf. Now I new this calf was in Lake Creek because we had seen her the day we pulled her mom out of there at the end of two nylon ropes and 4 horses. I had several people comment to me do you suppose a lion or bear got her. Now I never have that kind of luck. It was about the 19th of December when the phone call came from a snowmachiner. Now I know he thought he was doing me a favor. In order to repay the favor I asked him to go in with us. We went in on Dec 31 on 4 snow machines and rented the grooming machine from Bear Lodge to assist us because we knew we couldn't pull the calf out the bottom with a machine. The snow was just to tough. We snowmachined to the rims overlooking Lake Creek and what do our wandering eyes see but this calf, still upright and alive. We headed in and to say the snow was tough is an understatement. My neighbor Randy Barney and his son Charlie, Myself and Trent went in. As soon as the calf saw us he forgot about his hollow belly and ran for the timber patch underneath Anvil Rock. Trent and I chased him around on that timbered slope in snow that was between knee and waist deep. We kept trying to force him out of the timber into the deeper snow where he would flounder and we could easily catch him. He had obviously gotten the memo of our capture plans because all we did was exhaust ourselves. After you reach the point that your legs feel like rubber we soon realized the calf was going to win this round. As we trudged downhill to our machines with our tails between our legs the sweat still running down your back you realized next time you better come better prepared. When we reached our machines we sat there and rested a while and the sweat naturally started turning to ice. As the chills set in we figured we had better out of there. By the time we got the machines back to the logging road we were all sweating again and had melted the ice that had set in. We had lunch back at the logging road there by the Lake Creek cow camp. This was about 3:30 in the afternoon. We then poured the juice to the machines and were back at Bear Lodge in about 20 minutes, chilled to the bone. We paid the groomer \$150 dollars for his trip in and out with nothing to show for it. When I got home I realized it was New Years Eve and it was expected of me to go out. Boy was I glad when my wife took one look at me and said we don't have to go out if your not up to it. I was sound asleep by 9:30pm with visions of a calf dancing in my head. He had been a little thin as I guessed he had lost about 100 lbs from mid November to then. His diet is better than the Atkins. All he was able to eat were the tops of the sage brush sticking out of the snow that were within 20 yards of the leeward side of the timber patch. But after what he had put me through that was still to much.

We went in two weeks later as we had two weeks of sub zero weather and I wasn't going in with those conditions. The next trip we went prepared. We took a dart gun and a rifle and one way or the other it was the last trip! Randy Barney took his snow shoes, and after spotting the calf from the rim we drove over above him and Randy snuck down on his snow shoes and put a dart in the calf from 15 yards. He waited about 20 minutes for the drugs to take effect then took off in the direction the calf had run after being hit. I was sitting on the rim watching with my glasses and could tell the calf was drugged but he was still on his feet. After another 20 minutes the calf was still on his feet so Randy

shot him again. After a short while the calf did lay down and we thought all right we got the little bastard! As Randy walked up to her she jumped up and took off down the little ridge towards the lazy S curves in the bottom of Lake Creek. Now she had enough drugs to knock down a 1100 lb cow, but some one forgot to tell her that at 400 lbs she should be sound asleep. As she started down country in her drunken state Randy's son Charlie took off after her on his snow machine. Now Charlie is 5'11" and about 230 lbs and is on a Hot Shot fire crew in the summer. He tried twice to rope the calf and decided he was no cowboy so he drives up beside her and jumps from his machine. Took about 2 steps and grabs the calf around the neck. At this speed things became difficult to tell if Charlie or the calf was winning. Snow flew 20 ft in the air and ever now and then you would see a white body part never sure if it was the calf or Charlie. When they stopped rolling the rope that Charlie had hung onto were lying under him and the calf. His dad wanted to run down and help but had to stop laughing first. We westerners really are sick!! I jumped on my machine and headed to Bear Lodge to get the grooming machine to come in and get the calf. By the time I got back Trent and Charlie were still sitting on the sleeping calf waiting for the groomer. Now a grooming machine has a top end speed of about 10mph. It took an hour and 45 minutes to drive it in there. We tied the calf down and with 7 of us lifting put the calf on the grooming machine and he turned due west and we went straight up out of there. When we got to the logging road we put the calf in a sled and pulled him to Bear Lodge where we rolled him into the trailer while he was still seeing visions of sugar plums dancing in his head. I then gave him the drugs to reverse what he had had so that hypothermia wouldn't set in. I paid the bill for the groomer and this time it was 265 dollars. (Remember all the talk about the cheap grass we get) Now pay attention here because we have the heifer in the corral and she is doing just great. We are going to put some special tags in her ears and take her back to the mountain next summer so if you keep your eyes open you will notice the tags. I would like to say the ear tags will have a homing device but thats not the case. There will be something for whoever notices the different ear tags first on the trip.