

STORIES FROM THE FARM DOWNUNDER – 2!

MOTHER AND BABY.

If you continue to read these stories, you will read plenty of stories involving cows and their calves. Debra and I had such joy, and sadness during the calving season.

Baruch HaShem it was mostly joy... but there were times of great sadness.

Today we bring... well you will have to read the story.

Day is breaking, time to leap out of bed, have breakfast and go around the cows. As I jump on the motor bike, I always have a prayer that the cows will be ok, no calving problems. Most times our heavenly Father answered our prayers... but sometimes things didn't always go according to prayer or plan.

This year our cows were calving in what we called the "back paddock". The paddock was approx. 300 acres in size, with creeks, gullies, swamps and plenty of hiding holes for mums to hide their calves.

When riding around you count the cows to see if all are accounted for. Naturally if all are accounted for and there are no problems you are relieved and can relax.

There were supposed to be 55 cows in the paddock. No matter how many times I counted them I could only count 54. Believe it or not, it is not easy to count cows in the paddock, they move and shift making it hard to know if you counted some twice or left others out.

I rode all over the paddock and could not see any so-called missing cow. I convinced myself that I must have miss counted. On one count I came up with 56, on another 53, so I thought... clown you just can't count.

After some time, I thought no sense in riding around and around, either I have miss counted or it has gone into the neighbour's paddock. I was doubtful if this was the case, this neighbour had no grass and our cattle never went into this particular neighbor's property.

I couldn't let go of the fact that this cow was missing... I decided to do one more count. This time I really took time and effort to count... 54 cows. Repeated the process... 54 cows.

Where was this cow? I had been up and down the creek, looked in the swamp, checked every gully, tussock, hidey hole... nowhere to be seen.

Well better head home and come back later to see if she has turned up. Heading home, I turned off the bike at the gate to "relieve myself of some pressure". I heard this faint bellow. Sounded like it was down the creek near the boundary. I had ridden down there, but didn't see a cow.

Thought... better take another look.

Heading down the creek, I couldn't believe what I saw. Standing between some bushes was missing cow, large as life, but looking down a small cliff face into the creek.

Walking slowly towards her, talking as I went, I could see she was distressed. She was an Angus cow, not known for being quiet or easy to handle, especially when they had small calves.

Seeing what was before me, all I could do was shake my head. This cow had just had her calf. The reason I couldn't see her earlier was because she was lying down behind bushes... in labour.

Now Angus cows are known for their "smarts", but this one had picked the worst place possible to have her calf.

She was on a very small parcel of land with a cliff and a creek on each side. Not only that but the whole area was dotted with Wombat holes, literally deep and big enough to lose a small calf.

I could see the cow, but not the calf... my heart started to pump. The closer I got, the more agitated the cow became... was she going to charge me?

Then I saw the calf. Keep in mind this calf was born a short time ago. Here it was in the creek, standing up [couldn't believe it] in the freezing cold water, shivering. Mum had the calf on this small parcel of land... it had slide down the cliff, through some blackberry bushes into the creek when born.

I waded into the creek through the blackberry bushes to hold it up so it didn't collapse and drown. Mummy cow stood on top of the cliff looking down, extremely stressed and agitated. She wanted her calf.

How was I ever going to get this calf up the cliff, put it next to mum, hoping she wouldn't charge me and hoping the calf wouldn't fall back down this cliff or the other one, or into a Wombat hole.

I struggled to push the calf up the cliff face... I couldn't carry it because it was too steep. The closer it got to the top, the more the cow paced up and down. Then the calf started to kick and bellow... mum started to snort and paw the ground. I could see cow, calf and me in the creek together... with me worse for wear.

I kept my cool [had no choice] and kept pushing the calf up the cliff face. What seemed like forever [in fact only a few minutes] I had the calf on top of the cliff on level ground.

Task was not done... I had to somehow drag the calf away from the cliff, if I left it where it was it would only end up in the creek again and drown.

How was I going to do this without mum knocking me flat?

I waited on the cliff face, holding the calf so it wouldn't slip back down. Unless the cow jumped down the cliff, I was safe. Mum came over to the calf and began to lick

and clean it... good sign. She settled down some, but still looked at me with an expression of, "don't come any closer".

I still had to get the calf away from the cliff face. When a young calf [just born] tries to stand up and walk... it staggers around and has no real control. I had to get it into the middle of this small patch of ground.

I began to push the calf along the ground, with me sliding along the ground after it. I was still only half way over the cliff face, so I did have an escape route. I kept pushing until I was on the same level as mum and calf. Mum was backing away, then walking forward, head down... looking menacing... far from comfortable.

I just had to get that little calf another 5 meters away from the cliff face. I backed away from mum and stood on the edge of the cliff... it gave me a chance to pull the blackberry thorns out of my trousers.

Time ticked by and mum continued to clean the calf... she was becoming more relaxed. My next worry was, could the calf stand after it's ordeal and get a drink, it would soon try and it was still too close to the cliff and surrounding wombat holes.

Suddenly the cow turned and walked away... here was my chance... running forward I grabbed the calf and moved it to safety. Calf bellowed mum turned around, took one look and came charging towards me. I dropped the calf and headed for the cliff and blackberry bushes.

Fortunately [Baruch HaShem] the cow stopped where the calf was and didn't come after me. Mission accomplished.

Cow and calf stayed in that small, dangerous area for 4 days. Nothing further happened and both survived.

If I hadn't stopped at the gate and turned the bike off... the calf would not have survived.

Went home to report a "good news" story to Debra.