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The Cattle Mutilation Mystery Continues to Puzzle Ranchers and Researchers alike

By John Payne
Staff Reporter

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of the UFO controversy concerns the bizarre mutilation of cattle and other livestock, dating back to at least 1967. Thousands of body parts removed from cows and horses in the same precise "surgical" manner have been reported across the Midwest and West. There have been scattered reports worldwide. In 1974, more than 100 cases of mutilated cattle were reported in Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas. Be-

tween 1973 and 1975 there were 130 mutilations in Colorado alone. Although the numbers peaked in the 1970s, mutilation has been reported over the past 20 years. Most have happened within days of UFO sightings. The mode nearly always is the same: Eyes removed, sexual organs cut off, rectum cored out and tongue often gone. There rarely is any trace of blood at the site and there never are any tracks. These unexplained deaths have enraged cattle ranchers and left sheriff departments in the Midwest puzzled as to who or what could

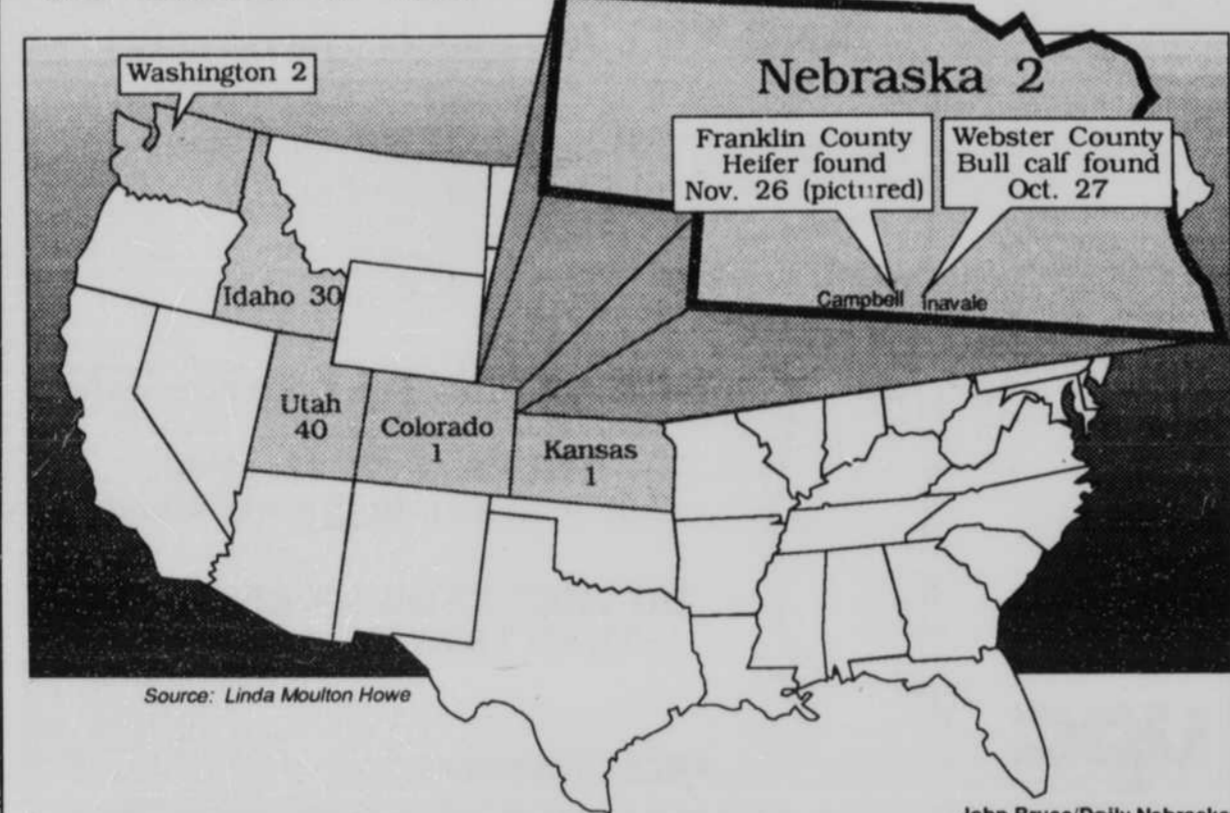
be responsible. One of the more popular theories places the blame on satanic cults, which mutilate the animals as part of a ritual. But UFO enthusiasts like Steve Johnson, assistant director of the Fortean Research Center in Lincoln, reject this possibility. "Let's suppose for a minute that we're all jumping the gun and that these mutilations can be explained away in earthly terms, say a cult of some kind," Johnson said. "In the thousands of cases in the U.S. alone, many occurring in broad daylight, no one has ever been caught. Ever. Not once in all these



This is a close-up of the heifer on the cover showing its mysterious wounds. The eye was taken out and an 18-inch section of its trachea and esophagus was removed through a six-inch incision in its throat.

Courtesy of the Fortean Research Center

Reported cattle mutilations in the United States since the summer of 1989



John Bruce/Daily Nebraskan

six-inch slit in its throat. Authorities speculate the heifer bled profusely from the hole, yet no blood was visible in the area. An 18-inch section of the cow's trachea and esophagus had somehow been removed, despite that the missing section on the exterior of the neck measured only six inches. A local veterinarian was unable to pin down the cause of death but told investigators from the Fortean Research Center that "if it was a person that did it, he had very good surgical skills."

Franklin County Sheriff Harry Schmidt believes the heifer died from natural causes. "There were coyote tracks galore," he said. "It was an old cow that just couldn't fend for itself anymore. But some people want to make more out of it than it is." While Schmidt rejects the notion that anything unusual happened to the animal, this isn't the first strange incidence he has heard about in Franklin County.

"A few years back, I heard a story that would knock your socks off," he said. "A local farmer called us out to his place to look at a large burned mark in his pasture that he just knew was made by a flying saucer. We couldn't figure out what it was, and so when something like this (mutilation) happens, people are inclined to believe anything." Assuming there is a connection between the UFO sightings and the mutilations, one must ask why extraterrestrials would be taking blood and various body parts from livestock.

Howe has her own theory. She bases it on testimony from a New Jersey couple who claim to have been abducted by an alien space craft in 1982. Howe speculates that the aliens may be on the "back side of a evolutionary genetic curve," and may be "devolving."

"Their DNA is no longer replicating, possibly as the result of some sort of nuclear catastrophe, and they need an enzyme found in healthy animal and human tissue," she said. Scientists only recently have discovered the genetic similarities between humans and cows. Their many "matching chromosomes" now make them a better choice for genetic experimentation than lab mice.

Howe, who is currently working on an environmental-awareness documentary for Turner Broadcasting System in Atlanta, says she can't accept the conventional explanations for the mutilations because of her experience. "These animals are not being killed by predators, or by devil worshippers," she said. "They are being harvested."

Other factors tend to dispel the cult theory. Aside from the lack of blood at the mutilation sites, the cuts on the animals have been described by sheriffs and veterinarians as looking very "surgical" in their exactness. The edge of the incisions are often charred or singed, causing people to wonder if a laser was used in the mutilations. A second theory speculates about government testing of military chemicals on the livestock. Unmarked helicopters often have been spotted in the mutilation area.

In the late '70s, ranchers in Wyoming and Colorado shot at low-flying aircraft because they were enraged by the loss of valuable livestock. But researchers rarely blame the military for the mutilations. As one investigator pointed out, "If the government were conducting some sort of testing on these animals they would certainly have the means to do so in a controlled environment, rather than out in a pasture in the middle of the night." In addition, identical mutilations have been reported in remote areas of the world such as the Canary Islands, which are near the northwest coast of Africa, and Australia, making the "government theory" even more implausible.

Most ranchers aren't buying law enforcement's standard explanation that natural predators, such as the coyote, are the culprit. A 1974 mutilation, reported in the St. Paul (Minn.) Dispatch, may have epitomized law enforcement's bewilderment at trying to figure out the situation. A 400-pound heifer, belonging to a Kimball, Minn. farmer, was found mutilated, the article said. It lay in a "perfect circle of bare ground in a snow-covered field with no footprints to be found

anywhere in the vicinity." Other instances of mutilated cows, found in muddy corrals and damp pastures, have been reported without any footprints in the area. The lack of human or predatory tracks near the cattle has caused many to believe the cows somehow are being lifted off the ground -- mutilated -- then lowered back down to the earth.

Investigators at the Kimball site found "heavy breakage of tree limbs far off the ground," in the wooded area around the mutilated cow. According to UFO researcher Terrance Mitchell, who investigated the case, all of the tree limbs had been broken. "They were not dead branches, either—they had been healthy limbs," he said.

In 1979, Linda Moulton Howe was working as an investigative reporter for a CBS affiliate station in Denver when she made "A Strange Harvest," a documentary about the mutilations and their possible explanation. In a telephone interview from Atlanta, Howe said she has investigated enough mutilation reports for another documentary and a follow-up to her 1989 book, "An Alien Harvest."

"When you hear about the number of mutilations, you really have to double that by at least two," she said. "So many cases go unreported because often law enforcement officials dismiss the idea that it could have been anything other than natural predators that killed these animals." The mystery continues. Less than four months ago, in the South Central Nebraska counties of Franklin and Webster, two cases of cattle mutilation were reported. Both animals had their sexual organs removed, and the second cow, belonging to Ivan and Nora Schukei of Campbell, had a

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