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I Know the Cattle A Poem for Joyce

This poem is written for Joyce, our former Resources Clerk, who once sent a message to all Forest range personnel pleading for help, as she could not distinguish the bulls, cows, yearling, and horses in her data base...

I think that I shall never pass
 Along a stretch of open grass,
 That my eye won't find delight
 When cattle graze within my sight.
 For 'cattle' as a kind of stock
 I've learned to know without a block:
 Bull, cow, calf, yearling, heifer, steer,
 The cattle classes all are clear,
 And when I look, I know I can
 Describe the 'cow' that's on the land.

The bull, he is a brutesome beast;
 For humankind he cares the least.
 Among the cows, one month a year,
 He falters not, his duty clear.
 He glares at all with beady eyes,
 His back a swarm of biting flies.
 I'll not mistake his ponderous gait,
 Or think that he's too overweight,
 When in a bull field I must pace,
 I'm watching him, prepared to race.

The cow, she's 'mom' most udderly,
 Her belly's broad and motherly,
 Her big brown eyes have lashes thick-
 The envy of many a human 'chick.'
 Unlike the bull, who'll grunt and bellow,
 A cow says 'moo' with manner mellow,
 Unless she's desperate, her calf astray,
 Her composure all in disarray.
 At times like that I know to try
 To keep my distance, slightly shy.

A cow that has not borne a calf yet
 We call a 'heifer' in cattle etiquette.
 A heifer's daintier than a cow,
 Her tail is short, she's less a 'frau,'
 Her belly's trim, her udder light,
 Her cares are few—she's more a sprite.
 A heifer's not a creature mean,
 She's just a cow that's still a teen.

A steer is what a cowboy calls
 A cattle male that's minus balls,
 He's usually of a heifer nature,
 But heavier built, of beefy stature.
 Steer calves, heifer calves to 6 months old,
 They're what the cow-calf rancher sold.
 From 6 to 18 months they're known.
 As yearling cattle, on their own.

Now yearlings are a curious group,
 They tend to cluster as a troop,
 Investigating things 'en masse,'
 Or scattering wildly through the grass.
 The baby calves are a special treat,
 They're cute and clean and soft and sweet.
 I really like their wide-eyed stare,
 And their frisking in fresh spring air.

I know the cattle, from bull to calf-
 The classes all I've memorized,
 But what concerns me still by half,
 Is how a **horse** is recognized!

by Katie Bump