

Laycee Herman  
Aberdeen Elementary  
Grade 4

## The Branding

One day I awoke from the whisper of my father. "Get up, it's branding day," he said in a tired voice. I jumped out of bed and ran to my dresser. I put on my yellow and blue polka dotted shirt with my blue jeans that have a cow skull on the back. I ran downstairs to see my mother holding two thermoses, one with coffee for my dad and one with hot chocolate for me. My dad and I were going to be riding on our horses to get the cows and calves and bring them to the pen to brand. My mom was driving with my little brother to bring the supplies to the branding pens. I put on my jean jacket, vest, boots, wild rag, and hat. I ran out the door as fast as I could, heading down to the barn. My dad passed me a halter to go get my horse from the pen out front. I walked into the pen. It was soft and warm with shavings for bedding and smelled like old dust. My horse Cindy was a bit antsy, but I managed to catch her and bring her into the barn. I brushed her for a little while as she jumped and pranced, but the brushing seemed to calm her down. Then my dad had to tack her up. I waited by the trailer for my dad and the rest of the cowboys who were coming.

It took us a while to get to the pen where the cows and calves were. Once we arrived, we immediately went to gather the herd. My dad sent me to the far corner to gather the cattle within the trees, while he went to get the animals by the cliff. All of us on horses met up with our groups of cows, and we started moving the whole herd to the branding pen. When we reached our destination, we got off our horses and tied them to the rail fence. I went up to the branding box and got out the supplies I needed for my job at the branding. I grabbed my vaccination gun. My job is to stick this needle-looking tool that squirts medicine up the calves' noses to help them

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stay healthy. My dad does the castrations, and my Uncle Blake does the brands. Brands are used to ID cattle so that if they get lost or escape, they can be returned to the proper ranch or owner. As my dad's friend Keith roped the first calf. I ran to it to put the vaccination up its nose. After twenty calves, I had to refill my vaccination gun.

As the day got warmer, and with the branding fire roaring hot, I took off my jean jacket and vest. My mom passed me a bottle of water and I snuck over to the truck to eat a quick snack. I had a granola bar and an apple. I devoured it as quickly as I could. I ran back to the branding area in a rush to get back to my vaccination gun. The next calf came in. It came so fast that you could see the tiny dust particles cloud up through the air making it difficult to see. I ran, tripped on the rope tied to the calf, and fell flat on my face. I could feel a big scratch on my lower lip, but I managed to still get the calf vaccinated. I went back to my mother asking for paper towel to wipe off the dirt and blood from my lip.

There were four hundred calves in total. We had done two hundred which meant it was time for lunch. There was chili, cheese buns, and all the toppings. I grabbed my bowl and filled it with the delectable food. I walked over to a patch of grass where all the cowboys and cowgirls were sitting. We chatted a little bit about school and then about my horse, but soon enough it was time to get back to work. We decided to switch jobs for the second half of the day, so I took over the ear tag gun from my Grandma so that she could look after my little brother while he napped. Calf after calf came in at a steady rhythm. We branded the last calf and turned all of them back out on grass with their moms. It was time to head back to the home ranch.

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My father put the bridle on my horse and I got up in the saddle. I rode down to the creek to give Cindy a drink of water. The creek was roaring so fast I could hear the water's little rocks getting picked up by its strength. Once my horse was done drinking, I trotted over to the group to catch up. As we walked our horses back to the ranch, I could feel the warm wind on my face making me feel relaxed. When I got back home, my mother told me to untack my horse. I took off Cindy's saddle, pad and bridle and put it into the tack room. I led her back to her pen and grabbed a few flakes of hay to feed her, the hay getting down my shirt with a tickle. I gave her a big kiss. With tired legs, I walked back up to my house just as it was getting dark. It had been a hard, long day but I wouldn't change it for the world.