

New Mexican Mutilations

By Zack Van Eyck

Strange lights in the sky, unmarked helicopters, angry ranchers and government officials in denial—America's most recent outbreak of cattle mutilations had it all. But the 1994 mutilations spree in Northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado yielded few discoveries that had some unofficial investigators optimistic that real progress was being made toward finding the cause of the decades-old mystery.

By the time a handful of the nation's leading "amateur" cattle mutilations sleuths met in mid-November in Taos, New Mexico and Alamoso, Colorado, more than 60 livestock mutilations of the classic variety had been reported, unofficially, in the two states. The official count, recorded by a reluctant New Mexico Livestock Board and law enforcement officials in Southern Colorado, stood at 28.

Compared to the UFO/cattle mutilations flap in northeastern Alabama in the winter of 1993, UFOs played a less visible role in the '94 Rocky Mountain mutilations. But unusual lights or aircraft were seen in the same location and time period in which at least two Northern New Mexico mutilations occurred, and veteran mutilations investigator Linda Moulton Howe even had a sighting of her own while in pursuit of the mutilators.

One 1994 New Mexico incident in particular added a new twist to the drama. On September 13, in a remote area of Mora County, mild-mannered carpenter Larry Gardea was hunting for bear in a birch and aspen grove. What Gardea said he saw, and heard, is regarded as a first in mutilations-related activity in this country.

According to Gardea, as he approached a chain-link fence he saw a dead cow lying about 30 feet in front of him. Immediately, he noticed a large, cylindrical hole

where the animal's rectum should have been.

About 10 feet beyond that cow was another, sitting motionless on its knees. Suddenly, about a dozen other cows began running in the opposite direction. Gardea's eyes followed them for a moment. Simultaneously, Gardea began hearing a whirring or humming sound he likened to the noise made by a welder's torch. When he turned back to look at the two downed cows, he saw a third cow moving through the air, just slightly above the ground, as if it were being pulled by a gravitational force or beam. The cow, bawling and struggling for freedom, was being dragged into the thick of the forest. Gardea saw no object of any kind in the direction the cow was being pulled, but instinctively raised his rifle and shot twice toward the sound.

The sound ceased, the cow got away, and Gardea, obviously frightened, ran like hell. Less than an hour later, he returned to the site

with Mora County sheriff's deputy Greg Laumbach and some other local folks. The mutilated cow was still there—the flesh was stripped from its lower jaw and a perfect circle of hide was removed. But the cow Gardea had seen on its knees was gone, and had not been located as of mid-November.

"It's the first time I'd seen anything like that," the dead cow's owner Estevan Sanchez said later. "I don't know who done this or what. I'll just have to be prepared in case I see something. "I don't believe this UFO stuff. I guess it was something other than those little guys that are getting blamed for it." A local high school student reported seeing a UFO rising above the mountains and dipping back down repeatedly in the early morning hours two days before the Gardea incident, and on September 27, a day after another mutilated cow was discovered in Mora County, Howe and Gardea saw something similar while making arrangements to borrow a four-wheel drive to explore

VIEW FROM A KILL—The son of rancher Max Cordova waits near the carcass of one mutilated cow on his father's ranch.

the county's mountainous backcountry. They saw several flashes of bright light at first, then noticed an intense white light rising and descending among the mountain peaks.

Howe grabbed her binoculars and was able to follow the object as it moved along the mountains, just behind the treetops, for about 40 seconds. "I've seen some really odd things in Peru and other countries, but not associated directly with my doing a cattle mutilation investigation," Howe said. "We were only about 10 minutes from where the cow was found on the 26th, which we did not know about at the time."

In mid-September, three Taos residents reported seeing a UFO. Maida Martinez, her husband Toby and one of his co-workers, Eric Tafoya, said they saw a bright white light, accompanied by about a dozen smaller lights, drift slowly over the city.

"It was the most spectacular thing I have ever seen," said Maida Martinez, 51. "It was about as big as my living room . . . There was a round light and a

Linda Moulton Howe

series of red lights, about 12 or 15. We did not hear the blades of a helicopter. We did not hear the engine of a jet. As the object got closer to our home, we heard a hum—that is the only thing we heard."

Taos police said a UFO was reported dipping and climbing above the mountains near Taos Pueblo a few

weeks earlier.

Questa rancher Tom Reed, who lost two cows to mutilations, saw a blue light moving throughout the sky over the Sangre de Cristo Mountains as he was loading cattle for sale in October. A glowing blue orb was sighted by a group of tourists a few hours earlier.

UFOs were also seen near Truchas, N.M., in late August, around the time Max Cordova's family discovered ~~the~~ of its two dozen cattle had been classically mutilated in the night. Neighbors reported hearing an unusual amount of traffic in the early morning before the cows were discovered—

CORPUS DEI—Kris Cordova shields his olfactory sense from a cattle carcass.

what sounded like large trucks traveling down the dead-end dirt road leading to the Cordova's pasture.

A few nights later, David Cordova, Max's son, saw a UFO as he was driving home late at night. He also experienced bizarre medical problems after removing skin from one of the mutilated cows in search of bullet holes.

"My gums swelled up really bad, and I had abscesses all around my mouth," he said. "The doctor said, 'When you do drugs, your gums swell up,' but I don't do drugs."

Eagles Nest Rancher Eli Hronich, who had 15 cattle mutilated in 18 months, felt a burning sensation in his fingers for days after examining one of his dead steers.

Hronich also saw flying objects in the sky, but he knew what they were: helicopters—big, dark green choppers with darkened windows and no markings. As he was removing a mutilated cow from a field, one hovered directly over him, almost as if to intimidate him, he said.

Rancher Ray Trujillo of Ponderosa also reported seeing helicopters before and after he discovered mutilated cows.

The Northern New Mexico ranchers victimized by the mutilations were virtually ignored by official entities through

the first 15 months of the Rocky Mountain activity. Gail Staehlin, an Albuquerque computer operator who volunteered her time to assist Howe in researching the New Mexico cases, put pressure on the New Mexico Livestock Board to start its own investigation.

She finally convinced Deputy Director Kevin McClellan to encourage his live-

stock inspectors to investigate the strange cattle deaths. "I asked (McClellan) what happens when he gets reports, and he says he just files them and half the time he doesn't even see them," Staehlin said in August. "We discussed that we had a problem in Northern New Mexico and something had to be done, but he wasn't really encouraging. I told him, 'I understand this scares a lot of people, but,' I said, 'This is your job, and you get paid for this, I don't, and I think it's time you joined the bandwagon.'"

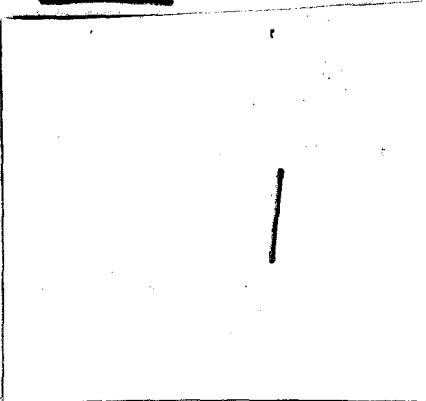
Officially, McClellan hopped aboard, but to many ranchers and investigators it appeared he was still running alongside. As head of the investigation, McClellan said little to the media and offered no timetable for the inquiry.

In mid-September, Staehlin and Howe met with a handful of victimized ranchers in Taos and asked them to call on Sen. Pete Domenici (R-N.M.) for help. Sen. Domenici responded by asking the Livestock Board for details of its probe and suggested federal funds might be available to assist.

Two weeks earlier Rep. Bill Richardson (D-N.M.) said he might ask Congress to make the mutilation of cattle a federal crime.

The politicians' involvement seemed to do little, except make some Northern New Mexico ranchers feel more comfortable—finally, someone appeared to be listening. They remained skeptical, however, that the Livestock Board's inquiry would get to the bottom of the crisis. Most remembered, all too well, the results of a court-commissioned investigation back in 1980.

Ken Rommel, a former FBI agent,



Max Cordova

was hired to investigate a series of mutilations that began in the region in 1978. After months of research—which critics charged was incomplete and done mostly from an office chair—Rommel concluded the region's mutilations were solely the work of animals—predators and scavengers—and anyone who thought otherwise must be crazy. Mutilation reports suddenly came to a halt, and the problem was officially forgotten until 1993, although investigators say the mutilations never really went away.

In conducting its 1994 investigation, one of the first and only statements made by the Livestock Board was that cattle mutilations were definitely not the work of animals. In late October, McClellan told Sen. Domenici in a letter that the board was working on the possibility that Satanic cults might be involved.

Rommel, meanwhile, was blaming the ranchers. Although no longer officially connected to the mutilations, while in Santa Fe last September Rommel said that he was convinced poisonous plants were the primary culprits and that scavengers had removed the animals' udders, sexual

organs, tongues and other body parts, and cored out their rectums with surgical precision.

"That guy up there doesn't know how to take care of his livestock," Rommel said of Hronich, a lifelong cattleman raising 3,500 head.

The bulk of the new knowledge investigators garnered from the Rocky Mountain cases last year came not from UFO sightings or government probes, but from laboratory work. Armed with a research grant from the Las Vegas, Nevada-based Bigelow Foundation, notable for its financial support of UFO causes, Howe was able to pay veterinarians, pathologists and laboratories to perform post-mortem tests on the animals.

"I've been able to do more work because of this grant than I've ever been able to do before," Howe said in November from her Pennsylvania home. "Our case files now are getting stronger and stronger."

Howe gathered samples of grass and other vegetation from the area where Gardea discovered the mutilated cow, and from the site of a mutilation in June in Garnett, Kansas, where a giant oval of flattened wheat was found. Subsequent tests by a Michigan biophysicist, Howe said, showed "changes in the respiration cells in the plants."

"We are definitely dealing with an energy that is interactive with the plants and has affected them at a fundamental level that cannot be hoaxed in any way," she said, adding that tests performed on the body of a steer mutilated near Las Vegas, Nevada, in February 1994 revealed the animal had a 3-by-2-inch portion of its skull removed without any external incision or disturbance in the flesh above the skull.

Elsewhere on the animal, Howe said, "There was an area excised with a serrated edge, and where in all other cases the serrated edge has shown cooked hemoglobin, in the Las Vegas steer there were

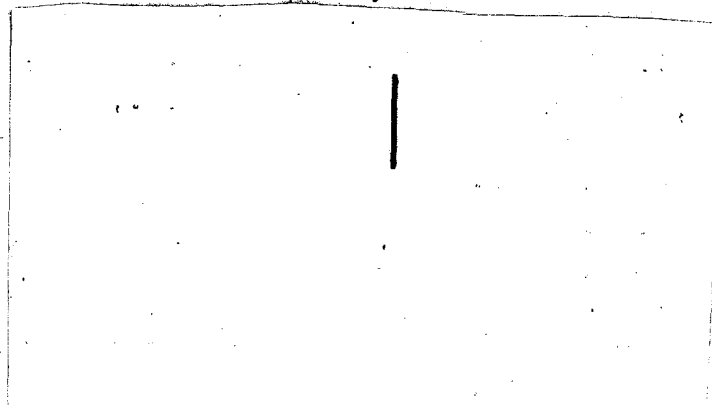
no signs of heat. We don't know what that means."

Back in New Mexico in May, Howe, veterinarian Tim Johnson and Denver pathologist John Altshuler were able to examine two mutilated steers found at opposite ends of Eagles Nest Lake. Both showed high heat had been used. "They were as fresh as anything we've ever examined," Howe said.

An August 29 mutilation of another Hronich's steers provided further evidence that animals are not likely responsible for mutilations. Howe arrived nearly 10 days later, but the animal was still untouched by scavengers. A coyote was nearby, pacing back and forth and looking at the cow, but would not approach it.

At the same time, mutilation reports began to pick up in Southern Colorado. At least 10 animals had been found, classically mutilated, between July and mid-November, including a buffalo found October 19. The animal was locked in a pen with 20 other buffalos.

The Colorado Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory found no bacteria or viruses



COMMON SCENE—Grandfather Alberto Cordova strolls by more mutilation evidence.

present in the buffalo and listed the cause of death as unknown. Five days later, three mutilated cows were discovered in Walsenburg, Colorado. Those mutilations followed a summer of UFO activity and other strange happenings in the greater San Luis Valley of Colorado and New Mexico. At least one of those sightings was reported nationally by The Associated Press.

Zack Van Eyck covered Northern New Mexico's cattle mutilations for The New Mexican, Santa Fe's daily newspaper.

TV News Shows Air UFO Footage; Presidential Promises

2004 by Guy Malone

On October 8, local ABC and NBC News affiliates treated Fort Wayne Indiana residents to footage of an unidentified flying object. Airport and military officials offered no explanation, but the video clip can still be viewed online, courtesy *First Coast News*. Hudson, Ohio's *News Channel 5* likewise posted a six-photo slide show of an unidentified flying object sent in by a local viewer in mid-October, while their on-site poll of nearly 3,000 reveals that Channel 5's viewers "believe in UFOs" by a margin of 4-1.

In September both www.msnbc.com and www.space.com released articles on the rise of "flying triangles," speculating that they are secret spy planes. Their reports were influenced by findings published by National Institute for Discovery Science, which closed their doors in October, bringing an end to one of ufology's more respected research organizations.

Presidential Promises

The Wisconsin Rapids Tribune also featured a brief story of "odd lights" reported by many local residents, and mentioned in the article that both Presidents Reagan and Carter claimed to have seen UFOs. While sitting U.S. Presidents traditionally remain silent, this election's presidential candidates are speaking up about UFO secrecy! Well, not The Big Two, but in late August, following Michael Badnarik's campaign visit to Roswell, www.breakingufonews.com editor Guy Malone landed and published a private interview with Libertarian candidate Michael Badnarik on the subject of UFO secrecy.

In addition, X-Zone radio host Rob McConnell interviewed Badnarik and three other presidential candidates who offered their views on-air in late October. They promised to disclose the truth if elected president. If this keeps up, reserve your Stephen Bassett/John Greenwald, Jr. 2008 bumper stickers now—with apologies to Richard Dolan and Jim Marrs, but I don't want to waste my vote.

Also in UFO politics, New Mexico governor Bill Richardson followed (loosely) in the footsteps of the late New Mexico Congressman Steve Schiff by

writing a one-page forward to the Sci Fi Channel's *Roswell Dig Diaries*, calling for an end to the secrecy surrounding the famous 1947 event. A Richardson spokesman also told *The Albuquerque Tribune* that Richardson felt that *if* (and they emphasize *if*) there is any additional information, it should be "declassified and released."

Odd Critters

Has the chupacabra been identified? In Texas, a second Elmendorf Beast was shot, killed, and examined by animal experts who have as yet failed to identify the critters. The previously never-before-seen animals are covered in blue-grey mangle and are said to resemble small dogs, but with a deer's head, long claws, and fangs.

The first was killed after a local farmer lost 35 chickens in a single night. The second body has been examined by a local game warden and by Stacy Pollack, who has over 20 years' experience as a veterinarian and zookeeper, according to local NBC affiliate WOAI. Linda Moulton Howe is investigating this case as well. Close-up photos are posted on the website

NUFOC Goes West

The National UFO Conference (www.nufoc.org) has finally found a permanent home in Hollywood, California. After 40 years of successful—if controversial—conferences, speakers and hosts in almost as many cities, NUFOC celebrated their 40th this Halloween weekend at the prestigious Renaissance Hotel, where the conference plans to remain for the foreseeable future.

Meanwhile in November, readers may have added The World UFO & Paranormal Expo (www.wupe.net) in Denver, Colorado to the growing list of annual UFO conferences you can visit in person, as well as the 2nd Annual UFO Crash Retrieval Conference (www.ufoconference.com) in Las Vegas, Nevada.

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