

The mourning after

It has come to my attention that a lot of young farm and ranch men are marrying women from the big city. I think this is because young ranch women are real smart, have been exposed to ranch life on a daily basis and they want no more of it. While gullible city gals are still in love with the mystique of the cowboy.

If you are a young farmer or rancher looking for a wife, I've put together 10 rules to follow if you are to have any hope of landing an urban, and urbane, woman.

—Unless you want to live your life as a celibate bachelor, or your first wife is just going to be a practice wife, do not, I repeat DO NOT, introduce your future bride to the intricacies of ranch gates until the morning after you tie the knot. Prior to this time let her drive and you get out to open all the tight wire gates and wrestle with the heavy iron ones. Even after you are married, expose her to the cold harsh realities of ranch life only in small doses because annulments are legal in most states.

—Spend as little time with her as possible prior to being married. You don't want to spook her. Speaking of which...

—If your future bride has never ridden a horse do not do what I did and put her on the wildest colt in the string on your first outing. It's also a good idea not to ask her to plug holes in fences or help sort wild cattle on your first date.

—Women place a lot of emphasis on fashion so prior to being married take her to the farm supply store and let her pick out her own longjohns, Carhartt jacket, heavy wool gloves and lined overalls. If she wants to accessorize with a snazzy pair of steel toed boots throw caution to the wind and let her splurge. Depending on the quality of the merchandise, and the length of your marriage, this should be a one-time expense.

It's the Pitts

Written by Lee Pitts

—Try to find some pleasant activities associated with ranching and make her an integral part. For example, at branding time have her organize the party, cook all the food, clean up after the crew and make her the host of the late-night post-branding party. This will instill confidence in your future bride so that when you ask her to do a really big job in the future she will have the self-confidence to succeed.

—If you want to land the city-gal of your dreams my next point is very important. Since you have very little else to offer your bride, play up the fact that raising your kids in a ranch setting in a 900-square-foot, falling down, rat-infested lean-to of a house in the country where they could be bucked off by broncs or bitten by rattlesnakes, will be preferable to raising them in a three bedroom house with a dishwasher, running hot water and inside plumbing in an urban environment where they might be exposed to loud rap music, ripped jeans and tongue studs.

This worked for one rancher friend I know and his bride stayed with him for three whole years before she left him for a double wide mobile home and the steady income of a bull rider.

—Don't let her see your financial statement until long after the honeymoon.

—Encourage her to cultivate her own circle of friends. Buy her a dog, give her drop calves and loan her the money to buy a milk cow so she will have someone to listen to her stupid opinion and crazy ideas at least twice a day.

—To show your respect for her, make sure she is comfortable. For every ton of hay she feeds off the back end of the truck during a rain or snowstorm give her a few minutes in the cab with you and the dog to snuggle and get warm before you tell her politely, "Honey, those cows aren't going to feed themselves, you know?"

—Whatever you do, DON'T live together before you are legally bound. Before she receives all the shower gifts and invests her money on wedding invitations the inviting chance for your city gal to run off with the horseshoer, after she sees what ranch life is really like, is simply too great to resist.