



WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

When doing all you can do isn't good enough...

Have you ever felt like no matter what you do, it is not enough? Maybe it is too much, too late, or it turns out to not be the right thing to do.

Caring for any kind of animal is tough, especially when they are sick. You wish they could tell you how they feel. It is truly guesswork as you, as well as a vet, try to interpret symptoms.

What is really frustrating is when every known test is done and still no certain conclusions are reached. Even more disheartening is what works well for some does not work for one. You are left wondering what else you could have done. It feels so unfair when a little one fights long and hard to survive but eventually does not.

Some years are tougher than others for farmers and ranchers. The difficult years are those that have one thing after another going wrong. Extremes show up in every unimaginable way; too cold, too hot, too much rain, not enough rain, not enough hay, not enough time, not enough money. Absolutely everything is out of your control and some years remind you of this truth at every turn.

Losing a calf is the worst. Afterward, you are tempted to second-guess every decision made. You long to change the outcome, and you cannot help but ask yourself what you could have done differently that might have prevented the loss.

I know all too well this kind of ruminating is futile and pointless. I have been the queen of regrets too much of my life. When our last sick calf passed away, every regret I have ever felt came rushing back over me.

Have you ever written yourself a letter when you are feeling blue? This is a practice I have found helpful in the past so I decided I would give it a try again.



The cattle make a trip over to the fenceline where the Bridges have placed 800 gallons of water for them during the drought. (Photo courtesy Annette Bridges)

Dear Annette,

You have got to stop beating yourself up when bad things happen that really are out of your control. You and your husband do the best you can. You both go above and beyond what is often practical and feasible when it comes to caring for your cattle. You can only do what you know to do. You are not to blame for not knowing what you could not possibly know. You must move onward and keep your focus on the rest of your herd. They need your full attention. Give yourself some grace and credit for doing your very best.

I started writing before the onset of the summer drought of 2022. I am noting the year because that drought may become known (to us) as the one that changed everything. It certainly forced us to do things we never had to do before.

Fencing off dangerously low stock ponds.

Setting up water troughs and hauling 800 gallons of water four to five times a day.

Feeding round bales starting in the month of July.

Spending more on cubes and creep than ever before.

Selling calves before we normally would. Retiring and selling old cows before we wanted to.

Indeed, the summer of 2022 pushed us to our maximum physical and emotional capacity, and I now feel much older than I used to. 2022 was a perspective-changing year.

Many philosophers and writers and undoubtedly farmers and ranchers have reached the same conclusions when they reflect on the times in their life. Seasons will come and go. Time will pass. Every season has a reason. Life is filled with twists and turns and many lessons to be learned. It is a chapter, not the whole story. ®