

MAR 16 1970

Poison Is Suspected In Death of 30 Cows On a Muslim Farm

ASHVILLE Ala., March 15 (AP)—Cows continue to die on the farm owned by Black Muslims near here, apparently the victims of poison dumped in their water supply last Tuesday night.

J H Davis, manager of the farm, said the cows started dying Wednesday afternoon. By Thursday, he said, the toll was 19 and by Friday 24 had died. Mr. Davis said the count had reached 30 yesterday and at least nine more were sick. There are 263 cows at the farm now, Mr. Davis said.

Sheriff Joel Woods of St. Clair County said that organs of the dead animals had been shipped to the state toxicologist at Auburn University for analysis. He expects a report tomorrow.

"I definitely suspect poison," Sheriff Woods said. "Who poisoned them and why is what we're trying to find out."

Mr. Davis said he thought the cattle were given cyanide.

"It had to have been put in their water troughs Tuesday night because I was home all day Tuesday," he added.

Mr. Davis said he had found the pinkish-white substance on the troughs that convinced him cyanide was used. He said tracings of the substance also have been found on rocks in a stream that runs through the farm.

Sixty-three cows have been killed since the Muslims bought the 1,000-acre farm near here last October according to, Mr. Davis.

The Muslims bought the farm from J. Ray Wyatt, a Ford dealer in nearby Pell City, and Robert McLung a, dentist. Both men are white. Soon after the sale, someone threw acid on a dozen news cars parked in Mr. Wyatt's lot. Later, he reported that his business was off "at least 90 per cent."

Last November, six cows were shot in one day on the Muslim farm. The incident drew an outcry from Elijah Muhammad, the 71-year-old leader of the Muslims. He white residents in the county that they were "playing with fire."

Black Muslims Would Sell Farm to Klan

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By JAMES T. WOOTEN
Special to The New York Times

ASHVILLE, Ala., March 16 — A farm owned by Black Muslims and plagued by the deaths of 30 poisoned cattle will be sold "to the Ku Klux Klan or anybody who wants it," its manager announced here today.

"No use staying where people ain't civilized," said John H. Davis, the manager, as he supervised the round-up of what was once a \$30,000 herd of 300 Hereford and Angus cows.

Now their ranks reduced by sniper fire and poisoned water, there are 223 left, and they are to be moved to another farm in Alabama that the black separatist group owns.

"We're just going to get out from amongst these heathen," the 51-year-old Mr. Davis said. He looked out across the rolling hills of the 376-acre farm that were dotted with the stiff-legged bodies of the bulls, pregnant cows and calves that died last week.

The farm has been the center of controversy in this northeastern Alabama county since it was purchased last fall from a white car dealer. Soon after the sale the former owner, Ray Wyatt, became the target of an apparent vendetta. His business was burned, acid was poured on his cars and his life threatened.

Snipers Shot Cattle

In November, according to Mr. Davis 25 cattle in the Muslim herd were shot by snipers hiding in the dense pine woods that surround the farm. Last week, 30 more died after drinking water from troughs in which a white powdery substance was later found. A local veterinarian said that it appeared to be cyanide.

Mr. Davis, a Lutheran who came to St. Clair County 22 years ago when fewer than 20 Negroes were registered to vote, believes that the Klan is behind the series of incidents.

Robert M. Shelton, Imperial Wizard of the United Klans of America, has said that his organization is leasing or buying the land around the Muslim farm "to keep an eye on things." Records at the county courthouse here in Ashville do not show any purchases by Mr. Shelton or the Klan. He is scheduled to speak in this town of 1,000 people on Friday night.

Mr. Davis is regarded by some of St. Clair's white citizens as a "troublemaker," perhaps because of his role in voter registration campaigns that have added 1,000 Negroes to the county list.

"We're waiting for the state toxicology lab to tell us what kind of poison it was before we begin an investigation," said Joel N. Wood, the county sheriff. "We definitely are going to be diligent in this and try to bring the guilty people to justice."

Manager Accuses Sheriff

Sheriff Wood is "just making sure he doesn't trouble the waters," Mr. Davis said, because he is a candidate for clerk of the Circuit Court. "He could find out who's doing this if he wanted to," he charged.

The surviving cattle will be transferred to a 3,600-acre farm owned by the group in Greene County, Ala., where the population is predominantly Negro and where Negroes captured most of the county offices last year.

"We think it'll be better there," said Mr. Davis, who has been in charge of the farm

since it was purchased. "But you can never be sure, because this kind of thing is condoned by the state, from the Governor and the Attorney General on down, and it could happen again anywhere."

The Muslims also own another farm in St. Clair County, which they purchased from Mr. Wyatt. The second is a 531-acre parcel. The total purchase price for the two farms was \$236,000, and Mrs. Davis says they can be bought now for approximately \$270,000.

"We made a lot of improvements," he said. "We don't want any profit, and we'll sell to anybody, including the Klan."