

Outrageously Outdoors



The Cows and the Decoys

by Steve Gilliland

This fall turkey hunting excursion could have come straight from the archives of old time Laurel and Hardy TV shows. I was so mad at the time I could have spit nails, but later it seemed so funny we nearly wet our pants laughing!

It was Saturday afternoon, and Joyce and I were snug in our blind, hoping to harvest her fall turkey. We had seen turkeys each afternoon, gleaning after the cattle in this small patch of feed stalks we overlooked. Rows of round bales lined this side of the patch, split into two groups by a driveway left for a tractor. The turkeys got there by way of a field drive through the thick, overgrown fencerow behind the bales, continuing down the tractor drive and onto the stalks.

Once before, some days ago, we were set up here amongst the bales. The turkeys streamed past, well within gun range, but none would stop or raise their head to offer Joyce a clean shot. We were close enough she could have nailed several turkeys on-the-run with one shot, but besides being slightly illegal since she only had one tag, the prized breast meat would have been so full of pellets it would've been like sand-blasting the insides

of our mouths with each bite. Today we had tried to solve that problem by adding a couple of decoys in the drive just before it entered the stalks, in hopes the turkeys would slow down and mill around long enough for a good standing head shot.

What was meant to fix one problem ultimately created another. This was a small lot of just a few acres, so the cattle were never far away, forcing extra caution when shooting. After all, the last thing we needed was to pepper one of the landowner's heifers in the butt with lead shot. Our county game warden may have been young and a wee bit naïve, but I think he'd still have caught on when I tried explaining the dandy T-bones we got from this 'turkey'. So the party was about to begin, and here we sat awaiting the guests of honor, when a half dozen of the cattle began to take a shine to our plastic birds. They gathered just inside the electric fence, exactly where Joyce would need to shoot, and stood there like dumbstruck junior high boys at the Christmas dance! You could almost sense their thoughts. "They look like turkeys," Clara thought, "But they sure don't move much." "But girls, they don't smell like turkeys," Elsie added. "Turkeys stink and these things smell like rubber or something" "I know," Bessie chimed in, "I'll turn around and try to pee on one and see if it moves like they usually do."

"This won't last long" I told myself . . . Fifteen minutes later I was fuming! I stuck my arm out the blind window, and waved

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it frantically, but barely drew stares from our bovine spectators. "Rocks," I mumbled. "Rocks should do the trick." I slunk out the back of the blind and scoured the ground. Rats! Nothing but sand and weeds; not a rock to be found! (By now, I think my wife had fast-forwarded through this whole scenario, and already seen the ending.) I tugged on one of the weeds that was as thick as my wrist, and it tore from the ground sporting a wad of dirt around its roots the size of volleyball. Eureka! Just what I needed! I swung the thing over my head like an Olympic hammer thrower and let fly, only to watch it dribble to a halt at the feet of the nearest cow, which looked down at it with disgust. "Stupid cows," I mumbled. Still hidden behind the bales, I jumped up and down and waved my arms frantically like a first-time auction goer trying to bid; still no response. I'm sure the cows were thinking something like "Will you look at that stupid turkey hunter jumping up and down like a first-time auction goer trying to bid."

"That does it," I thought! Turkeys or not, I WILL walk over there and those cows WILL move! (By now it had become a matter of principle.) I had only taken a few steps when I heard something behind me. Was it turkeys after all this? A dozen scenarios flashed through my mind: What if I spooked the turkeys, causing them to fly everywhere and my wife accidentally shot a cow in the butt in the melee; what if she accidentally shot me in the butt in the melee; what if she **purposely** shot me in the butt just to get me out of the way? I stopped to listen, but the sound I heard was not turkeys. No, it was raucous laughter coming from the blind! I squinted to peer inside from where I stood, and saw my wife bent over, howling hysterically. "Who's the blockhead now," I wondered. "Cows enamored with plastic turkeys or yours truly?"

We packed up and headed home, once again conceding defeat. "They're all in cahoots," I muttered. "Those cows and turkeys have a pact of some sort, I'm sure of it!" "Whatever you say honey," Joyce replied with a smirk. As we drove away, I imagined that little patch of feed stalks now filled with turkeys celebrating our defeat, however cows and turkeys celebrate. Off to one side, a group of turkeys had Bessie cornered; the spokesman for the group was asking her "Sooo, all those times you were TRYING to pee on us? 🌀"

Steve can be contacted by email at stevegililand@idkcom.net.

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