

Commissioners set liquor hearing, hear mutilations complaints

The commissioners planned a public meeting to hear input into a proposal by local tavern operators to allow liquor to be sold New Years Eve, although it falls on a Sunday. In a separate proposal they will hear input about allowing liquor to be sold any Sunday.

They also heard concern from a delegation of ranchers from the Nounan area about as many as 20 cattle mutilations that have occurred, among other business in the regular meeting of the county commissioners held Monday.

The commissioners set Nov. 22 as a day to hear input from the public to allow liquor to be sold on New Year's Eve at the local taverns after Jerry Hunzeker and Dante Pierandozzi requested the council approve an ordinance allowing them to sell liquor on that date.

Dante Pierandozzi also requested that sales of liquor be extended to all Sundays.

The public meeting to hear input is open to all members of the public at the Allred Center at 7 p.m. Mr. Hunzeker and Mr. Pierandozzi noted that if their taverns are closed for that evening that many would travel to Wyoming where sales will not be restricted. Mr. Pierandozzi said he does not particularly want the New Year's Eve ordinance as he has already planned to cater a New Year's Eve party at the Allred Center, but is more serious about a general Sunday opening.

The commissioners felt that public in-

put would help them with their decision.

The two proposals, one for New Year's Eve and one for Sunday in general will be considered separately.

A delegation of very concerned ranchers met with the commissioners to see if a concentrated effort could be made to stop the cattle mutilations that have taken place in the Nounan area. They reported that there are about 20 cases of mutilations. The sheriff's department reported four cases where the mutilation has been confirmed by a veterinarian. He said that there had been ten calls for cattle mutilations in the month of October and that there had been one more call this last weekend.

The ranchers say that they have lost about \$10,000 worth of cattle. The ranchers are asking the commission to help provide more help to the sheriff's department, in the way of expert investigators, night surveillance equipment, and money generally to help solve the problem.

Sheriff Brent Bunn asked that the ranchers be very aware of the problems and that they report instances immediately so that investigation can be conducted within a few hours of the animal's death. He said he is finding forensic experts to do analysis when possible, and that an expert investigator has been contacted and will be in the county. He is following leads from a number of sources.

The commissioners suggested some steps that might first be taken: that

ranchers be especially aware so that a fresh animal might be provided for autopsy to gather evidence, that night vision equipment be obtained, that some state help and expert investigators be found and brought in and that cattlemen be informed about what to look for so that they can collect evidence themselves.

Brent Bunn suggested that there are so many rumors going around that it is difficult to separate fact from rumor, but that he needs all the information he can get to track down leads.

Ron Law said that people are very nervous about the problem, and added he would not want an innocent person to be hurt.

Dwight Cocran said that evidence of cause of death needed to be obtained to confirm the mutilations.

The ranchers said that a variety of tissue had been cut from animals. The animals are generally female with one ear completely removed, the early mutilations included tail removal, and the genital areas had been cut out, and in some animals the ovaries had also been removed. The cattlemen have provided for a \$5,000 reward through the Sheriff's office.

Ranchers suggested that some people may be afraid to provide information because they fear retaliation by those involved. Cult activities or Satanism has been suggested but Brent Bunn said he has not had evidence of such cult activity in the county, but didn't preclude someone coming in from outside the area, or that cults may exist.