



A Cowboy's Life

USDA photo by Jack Dykinga

Have you ever dreamed of being a cowboy or cowgirl? It sounds like a romantic life: being out on the range, independent, sleeping outdoors with the stars as your blanket.

Today, being a cowboy can mean everything from being a rodeo entertainer, to riding a horse in competition, to working on a ranch with cattle. Most full-time cowboys think of their work both as a job and as a life they love. Most have skills with horses, roping and cattle.

Out on the range

What a cowboy's life is like depends on the land. On ranches in prairie states, such as Nebraska or parts of Texas, the land is flat. Cowboys can use pickup trucks or all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) to go out on the range.

Sometimes cowboys lead their horses into a trailer or truck and drive them to the pasture. Then they ride the horses while checking on the cattle.

In mountainous areas such as Idaho and Nevada, motorized vehicles may not be practical. To get to the rocky places where cattle are grazing, cowboys still need a horse.

In areas such as the Dakotas or Wyoming, ranchers have to go out to the range several times a day in the winter to break ice in the water tanks. When it snows, they have to deliver hay to the cattle, since cattle can't get to grass or corn under the snow.

A cowboy and his horse

All cowboys still rely on horses at least sometimes. Cowboys often say, "Two heads

are better than one." The horse knows what it's doing, and the experienced cowboy lets the horse do the work of controlling the cattle.

A good cowboy depends on the "horse sense" of his partner. A good horse knows how to work with the cattle. For example, the horse will help cut out certain cows from the herd so the cowboy can check on them and care for them.

The cowboy family

Before World War II, cowboying was a lifestyle for single males, usually teenagers. They had to be able to go off for days at a time to follow the cattle. This didn't allow much opportunity to meet girls or to raise a family.

Today this has all changed. Because of vehicles such as pickups, modern cowboys can cover a lot more ground more quickly. They can go home at night.

In the 1800s, most of the cowboys who actually had homes on the ranch were the owners or people doing jobs such as cooking. There was a big separation between the **cattlemen**, or owners, and the hired cowboys.

Today, most owners and hired cowboys work on the range together. Hired hands might live with their families in homes on the range.



USDA photo by Bob Nichols

This cowboy and his son are moving the herd from one pasture to another.

High-tech cowboys

Pickups and ATVs are not the only technologies that have changed the life of the cowboy. Other important technology includes:

- **Cellphones** make it much easier to keep track of cattle conditions and make sure the cowboy is OK out on the range. Sometimes, however, there is no service in remote areas.

- **Computer chips** identify the owner of the cattle and contain important information about the cow.

Early ear tags had only the number of the cow written on them. Today's computerized tags can carry as much information as the cowboy wants to include. This might be the cow's medical file, its family tree, when it was born or whether it is a good mother.

Cowboys and cowgirls can scan the chip, just like you scan food in the grocery store. Then they can download all the information to a laptop computer without even having to go home.

- Some cattlemen are using **drones** to keep track of where cattle are roaming or to find a missing cow.



USDA photo by Lance Cheung

Resources



On the Web:

- nationalcowboymuseum.org
- bit.ly/MPcowboys

At the library:

- "What If You Met a Cowboy?" by Jan Adkins
- "Eyewitness: Cowboy" by David H. Murdoch

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of cowboys are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



CATTLE, CHIP, COMPUTER, COW, DRONE, FAMILY, GRAZE, HERD, HORSE, LIFE, PASTURE, PHONE, RANCH, RANGE, RIDE, TAGS, TECHNOLOGY, TRUCK, WATER, WINTER, WORK.

G X D V M F W T B R H E R D G
C S C V A X P H O N E D P H Q
O A G M K F L S G A T T E D K
W W I C O M P U T E R R A N R
C L E Z A R G C Q I U L W W O
Y G O L O N H C E T C H I P W
F E S R O H U R S S K A R F A
R E T N I W X A F C A T T L E
D R O N E K P J V E G N A R Q
A L W M G R A N C H J E D I R

Cook's Corner

Maple-Dijon Roasted Brussels Sprouts

You'll need:

- cooking spray
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup panko (Japanese bread crumbs)
- salt and ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons maple syrup

- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 14 ounces frozen Brussels sprouts, thawed



* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

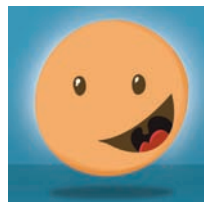
What to do:

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Coat large baking sheet with cooking spray.
2. Place flour in resealable plastic bag. Put panko, 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper in another plastic bag. In shallow dish, whisk together maple syrup and mustard.
3. Add sprouts to flour bag, seal and shake to coat. Add sprouts to syrup mixture and turn to coat. Transfer sprouts to panko bag, seal and shake to coat.
4. Place sprouts on baking sheet and bake for 15-18 minutes, until golden-brown. Serves 4.

Adapted from "The Robin Takes 5 Cookbook for Busy Families" with permission from Andrews McMeel Publishing (andrewsmcmeel.com).

7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.



1. baby cat (6) _____
2. Jurassic creature (8) _____
3. what you hit a nail with (6) _____
4. where Bambi lives (5) _____
5. place to watch a movie (7) _____
6. terrible snowstorm (8) _____
7. disappear (6) _____

MER	SAUR	KIT	THEA
NO	BLI	DS	DI
ISH	WOO	VAN	ZZ
ARD	TEN	HAM	TER

Answers: kitten, dinosaur, hammer, woods, theater, blizzard, vanish.

Mini Jokes



Carl: What type of cowboy steals teapots?
Caleb: A kettle rustler!

Eco Note



What is **organic** food? It's food grown without harmful chemicals such as pesticides and some fertilizers. Organic food also doesn't have antibiotics, hormones, preservatives or artificial colors and flavors. (Look these up.) Try some organic foods!

adapted with permission from "The New 50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth" by The Earthworks Group, Andrews McMeel Publishing (andrewsmcmeel.com)

Thank You



The Mini Page thanks Don Reeves, curator of The Cowboy Collection at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City, for help with this issue.

Teachers:

For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: bbs.amuniversal.com/Everyone_content/Teaching_Guides/The_Mini_Page/

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