



# Molly and her Calf

By Sue Newman

## About the author

Sue Newman did her B.A. in Zoology and M.A. in Photojournalism at Syracuse University. She combined the two by taking countless informal outdoor portraits of children and families during the 30 years she lived on the East Coast. This story was written for her granddaughter, who lives with her parents in Connecticut.

Sue moved to Cascabel, Arizona eight year ago. She spends her time helping with ranch work at Saguaro Juniper, caring for her various animals, and operating a 100-year-old river rock guest cabin. The cabin allows visitors a deeper understanding of the natural beauty and biological value of the middle San Pedro River Valley. Come visit Molly and her calf! Learn more about A River Rock Cabin in Benson, AZ at <http://www.vrbo.com>.

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Our story begins with where the cows are pastured. This is the irrigation system needed out here in the desert where it is so dry. You have to water regularly for the pasture to provide for the cows.



Most all of the babies had already been born, many on range before we brought them back to the irrigated pastures. But our newest baby is having a hard time and so is the mother, Molly. He was born 2 days ago on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, in what seemed to be a normal birth. But we weren't sure if perhaps Molly was carrying a twin because she remained so large. We don't think so any longer. But mother and baby didn't bond very well and so the baby was left in the field, parked as mothers will do so they can either graze or go to the farm pond for water, a good distance away.

A few of us had gone to dig young mesquite trees out of the fields so the side rolls for the irrigation system you see in the picture could roll across the field and not get stuck, unable to get past a tree. These irrigation rolls are nearly a quarter of a mile long.

No one could find the baby. Their mothers are very good at hiding them. So several of us put down our shovels and walked in a line across the huge field, looking for the baby and couldn't find him.



Eventually someone heard a baby calling and we finally saw a head pop up in the grasses.

Then it was a matter of getting Molly back from the farm pond. Several people went down to herd her back while some of us went back to digging mesquite.

Along the lane she came and into the field and so we gently guided her in the direction of where her baby had been seen. But she walked right passed him and kept going. What a sinking feeling to watch that. We didn't know if they just hadn't bonded or that she didn't want us to know where she had hidden him. But it didn't make any difference. We would lose him if he didn't get fed soon. It was then that we knew we needed to put both of them in a corral together for them to have a chance at bonding.



We tried and tried to get the baby to nurse. We placed him in just the right position and Molly was being very cooperative, understanding what we were trying to do. This was not her first baby. But the baby just didn't seem to know what he was supposed to do. And he was becoming exhausted. He had flopped down and looked like a hopeless bag of bones. We knew we couldn't let this go on for long. Especially with the temperature about 105.

Meanwhile, Molly's udder was getting bigger and bigger and more uncomfortable. She needed relief. So we put her in a squeeze chute and milked her into what ever bottles we had in our trucks. Her relief from the pressure was obvious and she became more comfortable with us milking her.





As soon as we were able to get a nipple on the water bottle with the milk in it and then hold on to him, we slid it into his mouth. He started sucking the milk down so hard that he collapsed the bottle. We gave him more and his energy started to rise. He was no longer giving in to dying. So we gave him a little more but we needed to get him back to his mother's udder so that he didn't become dependent on the bottle. A bottle baby is a commitment of many months.

So while giving him the last of the bottle, we moved him back to his mother and helped to put the teat in his mouth but the calf didn't seem to know what to do. We tried and tried again.



By then, in the late afternoon heat, we were all tired and one by one folks left. It seemed that we had gotten enough milk in the baby so that he could survive the night. And Molly had enough milk removed from her udder that she could also survive the night.

I went home and got a large livestock tub and a bucket and a 50 gallon water barrel partly filled. I drove it the 5 miles back to the little corral so they would have water overnight. Molly seemed glad to take a drink and later the baby did.



And our fretful leader, Woody, was left holding the bottle!



The next day, after putting Molly in a pen and trying to milk her through the bars, Woody decided that it would be best to move mother and baby up to El Potrero, the ranch headquarters, where there is a large squeeze chute which allows for easier milking. The metal bars are open in just the right place you need it to be. So he loaded the pair and hauled them the 9 miles up the road. Here is Molly in the squeeze chute. It doesn't hurt her and keeps her from hurting us.



So she was milked and the baby fed and then began in earnest, the business of getting the baby to nurse. Woody had done some research on this and learned that there was still hope that he'd eventually get the right idea. Molly seemed to understand that we were trying to help.

So we started to work with him to get the teat in his mouth. It took several people to do this. He was getting strong. Here are Pat and Woody wrestling with him

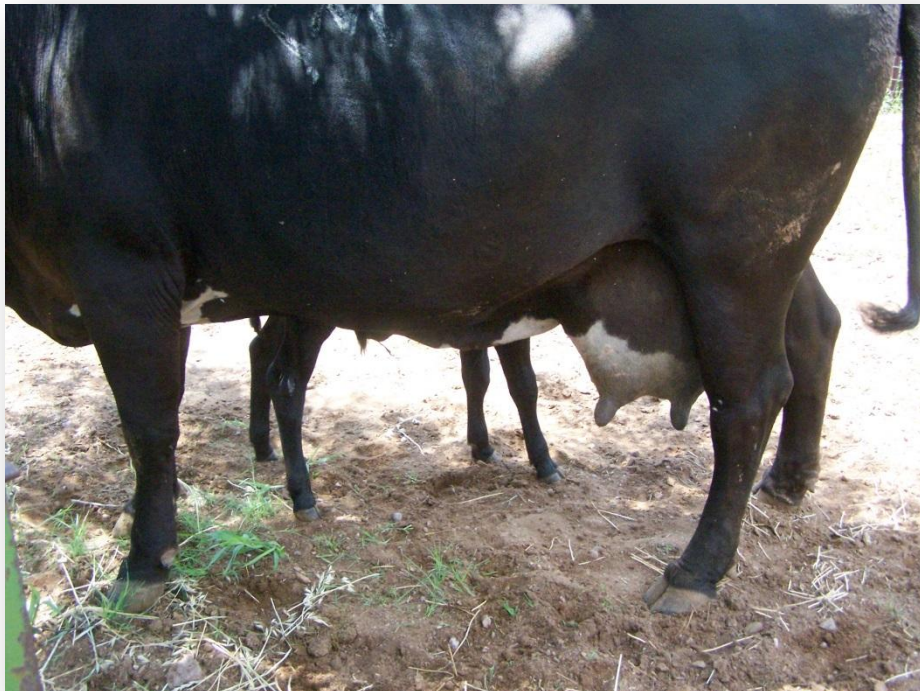




The good news was that Molly and the baby were bonding



But there was hope. Robert and Sybil were coming to help. Molly was their family's cow and he was home for a few days from working way up north. Twice a day they were there.



And then, a day or two later, the baby was nursing on his own. All the labor and time was worth it. He and momma will now be able to go back to be part of the herd.



And now, several months later, look how big he's is!



He needs a name. Can you think of one?



The story takes place in 2013, Cascabel, Arizona, Saguaro Juniper conservation ranching operation. Written by Susan Newman for her granddaughter, Paige who loves animals and wants to see them treated with care and consideration.

For those of us involved in the Saguaro Juniper Corp, we are guided by the following Covenant we hold with each other and with the land and its animals.

**The Saguaro Juniper Corporation is a group of over 60 associates holding both deeded land and land leased from the State of Arizona. This land is located in and around Hot Springs Canyon, a major tributary of the central San Pedro River in the southeastern part of our state. Saguaro Juniper associates are more likely to consider themselves stewards of the land rather than owners. To quote from the Preamble to our Saguaro Juniper Covenant, "In acquiring private governance, we agree to cherish its earth, waters, plants and animals in a way that promotes the health, stability, and diversity of the whole community." Thus we do not seek to isolate wildlands from all human contact, rather we hope to include human beings as partners embracing the land, its plants and animals. Saguaro Juniper is a share-holder corporation that makes decisions by a consensual process.**

In the late 1880s cattle grazing in the upper Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts during a severe, extended drought led to serious degradation of rangelands in southeastern Arizona. Today scientific and political debate continues about how much to graze, how to regulate grazing on desert grasslands, or whether grazing is compatible at all with desert environments. Those of us working under current laws see wide agreement on the following proposition: **ecologically sustainable grazing of desert environments requires careful control of numbers and movement of cattle. Grazing should be regularly monitored, and limited both in times of severe drought and for purposes of rotation recovery.** The practice of limiting access of cattle to riparian areas has gained wide scientific support. Commitment to long-term sustainability and to maintaining the richness and diversity of both native vegetation and wildlife is central to the Saguaro Juniper Covenant. Also important is our wish to integrate a "human presence" upon the land.