

MOOSE CREEK never freezes.
Willows almost hide ranchhouse, rear.



BALED HAY ON SLED IS LURE TO DRAW CATTLE INTO THE CORRAL

*Tom Lamb and his six sons
build a cattle empire
at Manitoba's Moose Lake*

PHOTOS BY MURRAY MCKENZIE

They Call Him Mr. North



FROM LEFT ARE: TOM, GREGORY, DONALD, DENNIS, JACK, DOUGLAS AND CONRAD



HERD MOVES THROUGH CHUTE



They told him it couldn't be done, so Tom did it—as he does most things—in his own way

IT'S FOUR years since the burly man from The Pas sat across the desk from a Manitoba government official to hear a scornful rejection of his theory that beef cattle ranching was feasible in his part of the province's northland.

In 1946, Tom Lamb—already a successful merchant, air line owner, fish firm operator and river freighter—started a 54,000-acre muskrat ranch around Moose lake, 50 air miles from The Pas. By trapping muskrat, he felt, the Cree Indians and Metis in the area could earn a living. His plan worked well until the bottom fell out of the muskrat market, and it was then he came south to suggest the government establish the Indians on small ranches in the same region to supply beef to an expanding northland.

Irked at the lack of governmental enthusiasm, Tom went ahead on his own.

On his Moose Lake land, he established the 7 Bar L ranch, brought in 61 head of Herefords for breeding stock. To give himself more time for his pet project, he gave up a \$50,000-a-year fishing business. Son-in-law Cal Gibson was left to manage the air service and another son-in-law, Jock McAree, to run the family store at Moose Lake settlement.

Five of Tom's six sons are pilots in the nine-plane airline. Conrad—more often called Connie—is not yet a pilot but makes himself useful wherever he's needed in the complex Lamb enterprises. All the men in the family are ready to rally round when Tom has need of extra help at the ranch.

Tom made an initial investment of \$40,000 for stock and equipment—and it's paying off. He marketed his first beef in 1957, has more to sell each year. Last spring, his cows came home with 116 new calves.

Protected from the weather by the willow clumps which abound in the region and well-nourished on good natural grasses and the abundant feed Tom grows, his herd is thriving. By next year, he predicts, he'll have a thousand of the white-faced beauties.

They say around Moose Lake that Tom Lamb loves every one of the Herefords "the way a boy loves his pet dog." As the cattle were brought into the corral during the last roundup, Tom warned his ranch hands, "Don't poke those animals too hard, now." He walked from one animal to another, gently scraping snow off its back with a stick, speaking in quiet, confidential tones to each Hereford as he scraped. Also admonished was Dr. Charles Kuras, veterinarian there to take Brucellosis tests on the cattle (all were negative). "Now, listen, Doc, you take it easy on those Herefords," Tom said, "I don't want those cattle hurt."

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SKIPPY L.—THE LAMB TUG—AND BARGES ON SHORE FOR THE WINTER

"There's more than a million acres of land like this"

The Lamb family's northland adventure began in 1900, when Tom's father came from Yorkshire to found the trading post at Moose Lake. Tom took over in 1927, soon added commercial fishing to the operation. By 1935, existing air services for freighting his fish failed to satisfy Tom. He learned to fly and Lamb Airways was born. Last year, the nine Lamb aircraft flew almost 1,500,000 miles with mining men, sportsmen and other north country travellers. "Don't Ask Us Where We Fly—Just Tell Us Where You Want To Go" is the Lamb Airways' slogan.

Another Lamb enterprise is his river freight service, where a Lamb tug pulls Lamb barges laden with northland needs from break-up until the ice comes again in autumn. It's not surprising he's known as "Mr. North."

Since the beef bug hit, Tom and Mrs. Lamb live at the ranch, where they are often visited by some of their nine children and 16 grandchildren, and occasionally by all of them. By radio, he keeps in touch with the airways base at Grace lake, near The Pas, the store at Moose Lake, the muskrat ranch and—in summer—with the tugboat Skippy L.

Tom pioneered in muskrat ranching in Northern Manitoba and his system of dikes and dams proved so successful the government followed suit. Muskrat ranches were established along the Saskatchewan river from The Pas to Grand Rapids, 85 miles away on Lake Winnipeg. Until fur prices dropped, the muskrat farms were a boon to Indian and Metis families in the region.

Tom wonders why the government won't take another leaf from the Lamb book. "I can't understand why the government doesn't do the same thing I'm doing," Tom says. "There's more than a million acres of land like this between The Pas and Grand Rapids. It's one certain way we could help the Indians and Metis here, and we could, at the same time, develop this region into one of the richest cattle lands in the whole country."



CONNIE AND JACK WHEEL OUT A PLANE



CAROL LAMB McAREE WORKS IN STORE



DR. KURAS SNIPS OFF HEREFORD HORNS



BULLDOZER PLOWS TRAIL. HAULS SLED



THIS IS FIRST PHOTO EVER MADE OF ALL LAMB CLAN ADULTS ●