

# The Cow

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Dave Raymond and Fred Wilson were alien hunters. They were investigating UFOs in southern Oklahoma when they received several intriguing reports. Dozens of cattle had been mutilated in the rural countryside. They were heading there now.

“We’re in the middle of nowhere.”

“We’re in the middle of the biggest rash of alien mutilation reports in the entire country, that’s where we are. Where’s the camera?”

Dave twisted and reached into the backseat. Grabbing the camera, he responded, “Right here.”

“Good. I want photographic evidence of these cattle. If the reports are as good as they claim, we could really be ON-to something here,” said Fred, swerving to avoid a dead cow.

Dave looked over his shoulder. “It wasn’t mutilated,” he sighed. He turned to Fred and continued, “I really hope this isn’t a bust.”

“It won’t be. I’ve got a good feeling about this one.”

“You always say that, Fred. You always say, ‘I’ve got a good feeling about this lead’.”

“This time I mean it,” Fred replied. He took a right on a desolate dirt road. “We should be there in a few minutes.”

Dave looked out the window. There wasn’t a city or town in miles. Grass and clumps of trees went on as far as the eye could see. It was early morning, and the sun cast deep shadows across the green and yellow landscape. Somehow, though, the show of serene color that usually brought tranquility to the viewer brought a sense of uneasiness to Dave. Uncomfortable, Dave thrust his hand at the radio.

“I can’t stand country music.”

Fred looked at him quizzically for a moment, but then said, “We’re here.”

The rugged Jeep with the MUFON logo on its side grumbled to a halt. Dave squinted through the windshield to see an unimpressive house fifty yards ahead. A beat-up pickup truck with chipping red paint was parked close by. Fred turned the Jeep’s engine off, and the sudden quiet made Dave even more anxious. The only sound was the creaking of a skinny windmill perched alongside the house.

Finally, the front door opened. An enormous man stepped out and hustled towards the Jeep.

Dave and Fred exchanged glances, and then got out of the Jeep. They started walking towards the huge man.

They met about halfway between the Jeep and the House, on a patch of dry dirt. The bull of a man outstretched a muscular arm, which the two UFO hunters shook weakly.

There was a nervous silence until Fred spoke up, "Thanks for telling us about what's going on here. I'm Fred, and this is Dave."

"Pleasure to meet you," was the grunted reply.

"And you are...?"

The man's bearded face made a peculiar expression as he said curtly, "I prefer anonymity."

"Oh- of course," Fred stammered. "Could we take a look at your cattle?"

"Yes. Follow me."

The man turned around abruptly and started walking powerfully away. Dave and Fred had to run just to keep up with the man's walking pace. They made their way around the house and towards a fenced-in area. Piles of rotting meat littered the dying grass.

"Are- are those cows?" Dave stuttered quietly, speaking for the first time to the man.

"Yes."

"When were they killed?"

"Those ones, two weeks ago."

"Do you have any fresher ones?" Dave asked hopefully.

As he was walking, the man turned to look at Dave. His eyes were animalistic. Dave's anxiety rose.

Eventually, the man responded, "Yes. This way."

In one motion, the man vaulted over the fence. Dave and Fred struggled to climb over it.

They passed by several carcasses that had been dead for some time. Even still, it was evident that something unusual had happened to them. Their hooves were missing. Their sides had been split open, and their internal organs had been removed. The most horrific detail was that their skins were missing.

“Here’s one that was killed two nights ago,” the man bellowed a distance away.

Dave and Fred ran to catch up with the man. They were out of breath when they reached the carcass. This one was in much better condition. It had not even started to decompose yet. It had been completely skinned. Every muscle on the carcass was grotesquely displayed. It looked demonic, as its entire body was blood red.

Dave snapped a few pictures as Fred knelt down to examine the carcass. He ran his fingers along the opening in the animal’s side.

“It looks like this cow’s side was opened surgically, and its ribcage was severed cleanly. It’s missing its lungs, heart, and intestines.” He looked up at Dave and added, “I just can’t believe that it was completely skinned.”

Dave turned to the man and asked, “Did you see anything?”

The man just stared at the carcass and answered, “No. I was asleep when it happened.”

Fred snipped off a piece of muscle and collected some blood from the carcass. He put the samples into his field pouch.

“We’ll analyze these when we get back.”

The man nodded and suddenly started speaking more elaborately. “You know, there are more cows like this over at another ranch a few miles down the road. You might find something even more interesting there.”

“We’d still like to ask you some more questions,” Fred interjected.

“I have work to do. You should go to the other ranch,” the giant said coldly.

Sensing that they had overstayed their welcome, Dave said for both Fred and himself, “That’s fine. We’ll leave. Thank you for showing us these carcasses.”

The alien hunters turned and briskly started walking away from the man. Once they were a good distance away from him, Dave looked over his shoulder. The man was gone.

“Let’s get out of here,” Dave whispered.

They got into the Jeep and pulled away from the house.

“That was really weird,” Dave said shakily.

“That’s an understatement!” Fred laughed. “We’re on the cusp of the biggest alien story of the decade!”

Dave turned and sternly replied, “I’m not talking about the mutilated cattle! There was something really weird about that guy. I don’t trust him.”

“Don’t worry, Dave,” Fred assured him. “When we tell MUFON about this, they’ll give us unlimited funding, not to mention incredible publicity.”

“Good, so let’s head back to the hotel.”

“No, we’re going to that ranch the guy told us about.”

“You’ve gotta be kidding me!” Dave groaned. “Didn’t I just tell you there’s something not right about this whole situation? I don’t think it’s a good idea to go further into this no man’s land!”

“If it means more mutilated carcasses to take samples from, then we’re sure as heck going to take this opportunity,” Fred retorted. He pointed at the windshield and added, “Look, I see the ranch just past that bend.”

The Jeep once again grumbled to a halt. Fred turned the engine off, and, with some effort, got out of the Jeep. Dave knew he was past the point of no return.

They walked apprehensively towards the house. Dave noted that this one was even more unkempt than the last. There were no vehicles nearby, and it looked as if nobody had lived in the house for years.

Fred rapped on the front door and called out, “Hello?”

“Nobody’s here. Time to go back,” Dave said impatiently.

Fred walked around the side of the house and peered into the spacious but overgrown backyard. He returned to Dave.

“I don’t see any cattle over there,” he sighed.

“Even more reason to leave right now.”

“Hold on a second,” Fred replied quickly. “Maybe this is just the farmhouse, and the cattle are somewhere else. Let’s check this place out to see if anybody lives here.”

“I really don’t think-”

“It’ll just take a second, and then we’ll go back. I promise.”

Dave reluctantly answered, “Fine. Let’s make it quick.”

“I’ll check the house, you look in the barn,” Fred called out as he began walking to the back door.

With a groan, Dave began to make his way to the barn. He noticed it was very dilapidated, and he thought to himself that they were just wasting their time investigating this deserted place.

Dave reached the barn door and felt the scratchy wood. Nobody had cared for this barn in a long time. Slowly, he pulled open the massive door.

Apprehensively, he peeked inside. There were several large holes in the roof, and the sun streaked through in beams. The bars of sunlight revealed particles dancing in the musty air.

As Dave stepped inside, he immediately smelled a sickening odor. The dim light inside did not reveal the source of the stench. He took another cautious step forward, and the smell grew worse.

Dave walked further into the barn to investigate. He walked into one of the beams of sunlight, which temporarily blinded him. After he passed through it, he was once again plunged into darkness.

As the stench became even more profound, a sense of dread overcame him. It was the stench of rotting meat. Something was very wrong here. He had to get out.

“Fred!” he yelled as he turned to leave.

Suddenly, he was struck in the back of the head. He collapsed on the ground in a beam of sunlight. Dazed and blinded by the light, he spun around on the straw-covered ground, but could not see what had hit him.

The straw just feet away from him crunched. Something heavy was moving towards him. He saw a massive, murky shape manifest itself in the darkness.

Terrified, Dave crawled backwards, out of the beam of sunlight. He was facing whatever was coming towards him, but he still could not see it clearly.

Suddenly, the silhouette emerged from the darkness and stepped into the beam of sunlight. Dave stared in horror.

A massive figure towered over Dave. He was wearing a cowskin that covered his entire body. For a mask, he wore a cow's face, and a scraggly beard protruded beneath it. He wore a very strange necklace.

Dave pleaded, "I was just looking around. I'm sorry."

The cowman said nothing, but took another step toward Dave.

"Please don't hurt me. You want money?" Dave begged, reaching into his pocket and grabbing a fistful of dollars.

The cowman ignored the money, but reached into Dave's pocket and took his phone. Dave stared at the cowman confusedly. The cowman dropped the phone onto the ground and smashed it to pieces with his boot.

"Oh, God," Dave whimpered.

The cowman leaned in closer, and his necklace dangled in Dave's face. It was then that Dave noticed the necklace was strung with human fingers.

"Oh, God," Dave croaked again, quieter this time.

In a flash, the cowman produced a pair of bolt cutters. Dave struggled to his feet, and attempted to escape. The cowman tackled Dave to the ground.

"No! Please don't kill me!" Dave implored, struggling in vain against the hulking madman. "Fred, help!"

The cowman pinned Dave's wrist to the ground, and drew the bolt cutters closer. Dave shrieked in panic.

In one quick motion, the cowman snipped off Dave's index finger. Dave screamed in agony and clutched at his bleeding hand.

The cowman released Dave, who scrambled to his feet and reached the door of the barn. Dave looked back at the cowman through tearing eyes. The cowman stood menacingly in the patch of sunlight, and slowly lifted a bulky arm. He pointed into the distance.

Dave turned again and sprinted away. His hand was squirting blood.

“Fred, we’re leaving!” he yelled, running past the farmhouse.

As he rounded the corner of the house, he saw the Jeep parked about a hundred yards away. He felt a spark of hope, and sprinted towards the Jeep as fast as he could. Dave looked over his shoulder, but the cowman was nowhere to be seen.

Dave no longer cared about Fred. His only objective now was to get himself as far away from this place as possible. Panting, he hurled himself at the Jeep.

Dave unlocked the door, and leaped inside. He quickly closed the door behind him and put the key in the ignition. He turned the key, and the engine roared to life. Dave laughed and thanked God.

Suddenly, the engine began to sputter. A few seconds later, it died. Dave’s heart sank. He tried cranking it again, but it would not even start.

Panicking, Dave tumbled out of the Jeep. He smelled the distinctive odor of gasoline. He dropped to the ground and craned his neck to look underneath the Jeep. Sure enough, he found a puddle of dripping gasoline. The cowman had cut the fuel line.

Suddenly, Dave was lifted into the air and slammed against the driver’s side door. The cowman had him by the collar, and was staring at him through his cowskin mask. Dave noticed his necklace had one more finger on it.

The cowman again brought out his bolt cutters, and this time cut off Dave’s thumb. Dave hollered in pain. The cowman released his grip on Dave, who slumped to the ground.

Dave looked up at the cowman with despair. Once again, the freak pointed into the distance. Dave realized what the cowman was doing.

The maniac was playing a game with Dave. He was going to continually catch Dave, cut off a finger, and then release him. He would hunt him down again and repeat the process. It was a deadly game of cat and mouse. The cowman was doing this for fun and sport.

Dave struggled to his feet and dashed towards a nearby treeline. It would take him over a day to get to the nearest town, but he had to try. Once he was safely inside the small forest, he stopped. He took off his shoe, and then pulled off his tube sock. He wrapped it around his badly bleeding hand, and then slipped his shoe back onto his bare foot.

Desperate, he crashed through the woods. He had to get away from the cowman.

Dave could not elude him. Over the course of the next few hours, the cowman continued to catch Dave and then release him, each time taking off another finger.

Dave, now completely fingerless, attempted to seek refuge in a tree. Wearing socks to cover up the stubs where his fingers used to be, he attempted to climb. Without thumbs and fingers, he was barely able to make it onto the first branch. He draped some foliage over himself in an effort to become camouflaged.

He stayed there for about a half hour, silently weeping. He wondered if he would live to see the next day.

As he sobbed, he looked down at his mutilated hands. Even if he escaped the cowman, which he probably would not, he would never again be the same. Sure, he might get some prosthetic limbs, but he would be emotionally and mentally scarred for the rest of his life.

Slowly, he stopped crying. His anxiety drained away as he came to terms with his situation. He was willing to accept his death.

He jumped down from the tree and looked around. The forest was still.

Dave embraced his fate by calling out, "I'm here! Come on!"

His shouts were met only with silence. He was utterly alone.

"Come on! Kill me!"

This time, he heard the sound of crunching footsteps approaching him. Dave stood up, ready to face his death. He saw movement in the bushes ahead of him, and braced for the inevitable.

Dave watched as a figure emerged from the underbrush. He stared in surprise, and then laughed with delight.

Fred was standing before him in the dim light.

Dave rushed towards his friend, thrilled that he was finally saved. At the same time, Fred began to walk towards Dave, moving with surprising power.

Fred walked onto a patch of grass where sunlight shone through the trees prominently, and Dave slowed his approach. Fred definitely looked much larger than before. The skin around his eyes and mouth looked... loose. In a second, Dave's joy turned to horror.

The cowman was wearing Fred's skin.

