

Gasoline economy?

Cattle magnet stampede is on

McClatchy Newspapers Service

They're called "cow magnets," but what they're attracting now is herds of motorists.

Modestans, like other motorists from the West Coast to the Rocky Mountain states, are stampeding to livestock supply stores as reports spread that the small magnets somehow can improve gasoline mileage by two to five miles per gallon.

Some stores in Central and Northern California say they cannot keep the devices in stock even after selling thousands — many times more than were sold when dairy farmers were the only buyers.

A cow magnet is a capsule-shaped device about three inches long and retailing for anywhere from \$3.99 to \$6.99. It is placed in a cow's stomach, where it remains all her life, attracting nails, tacks and bits of wire that otherwise could kill her by puncturing her intestines. The magnets have been around perhaps 50 years.

No one queried by The Bee — including a major manufacturer of cow magnets — knows whose ruminations first prompted him or her to place the devices among the innards of an auto instead of a cow. The first reports of the new use came from the Pacific Northwest.

The news and sales of the fuel-saving miracle were further spread by a San Francisco columnist. "Sales began picking up just about a week before it appeared in Herb Caen's column," said Jim Lane, manager of Big R in Modesto. "After that, it really took off."

"We've probably sold 400 or 500 the past few weeks — that's probably about three or four times more than we usually sell," said Lane. "We had a man call and wanted us to send six collect to New York City. We sent them to him through the mail."

The Big R in Klamath Falls reports

12,000 to 14,000 of the devices to buyers from all over the country. Normally, he said, no more than 2,000, and possibly as few as 150, would have been sold during that time.

Bob Wallace, manager of Modesto's Albers Country Stores, said the unusual demand has caused a price increase of the product. "We have some people — people who use them for what they are intended — mad because the price has gone up. They're \$4.99 now and six months ago they were \$3.50."

Motorists install the magnets in pairs, taping one to each side of the fuel line as close as possible to the carburetor. Reversed polarity is said to be involved.

That is, the positive pole of one magnet is lined up with the negative pole of the other magnet, so that the ends attract each other.

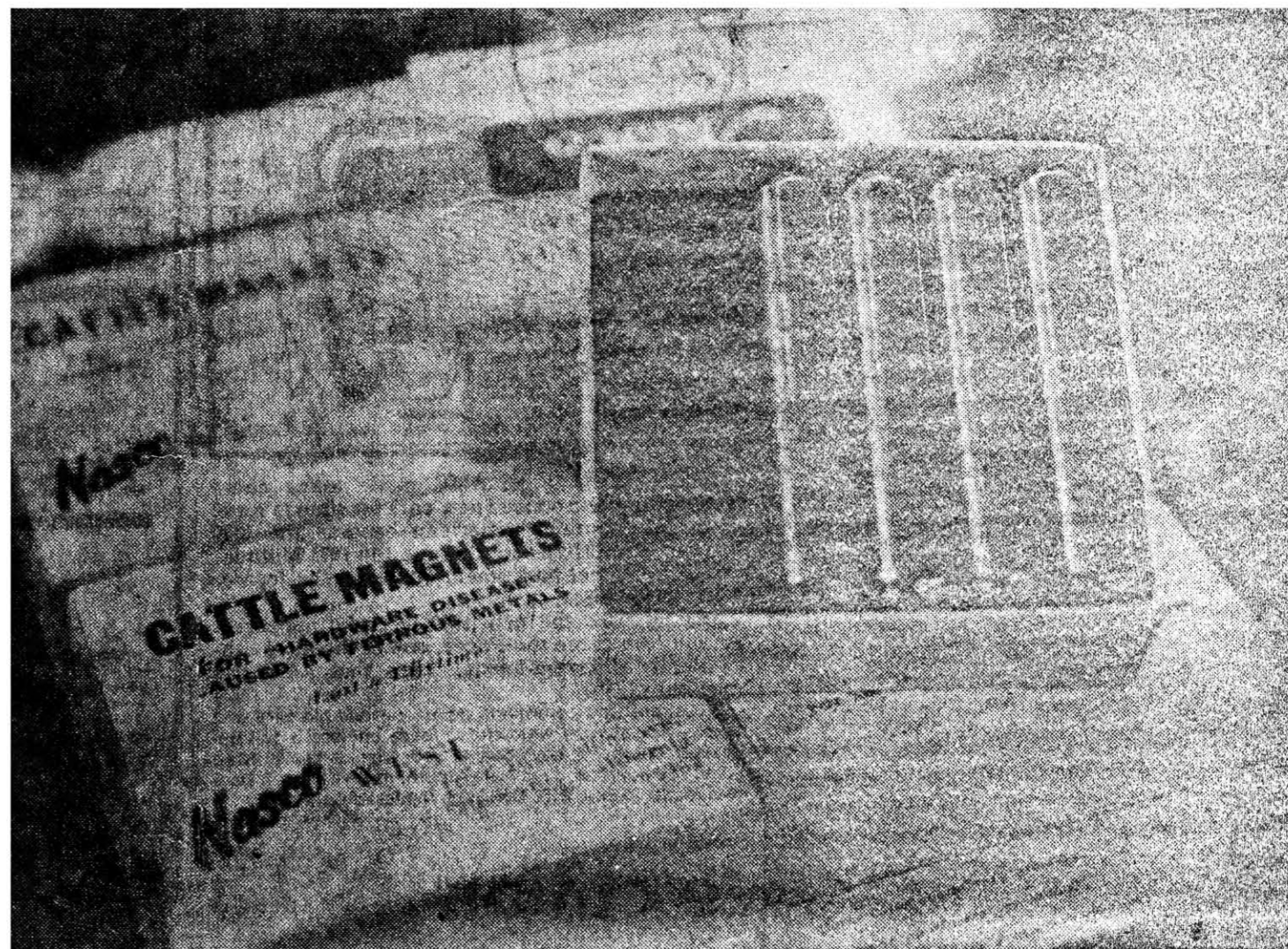
"My opinion is the magnetic properties at some point cause a more efficient breakdown of either gasoline vapor or gas itself in some way," said John Rhinehart, owner and president of the Rhinehart Co. The Spencerville, Ind., livestock equipment company is a major manufacturer of the devices, making Rhinehart a potential cow magnet magnate.

Although the company has just begun testing its six types of cow magnets for possible gas-saving properties, Rhinehart said, "We assume there must be something to it because enough people are asking about it."

Too, he said, the company now is receiving orders from auto specialty stores — in addition to larger orders from livestock supply stores where demand still grows for cow magnets for gas hogs.

Rhinehart said plans are being made to increase production of the devices, but he declined to reveal current or future production levels for the privately owned firm.

Do the devices really save gasoline



The magnets are designed to protect livestock from ill effects of consuming metal.

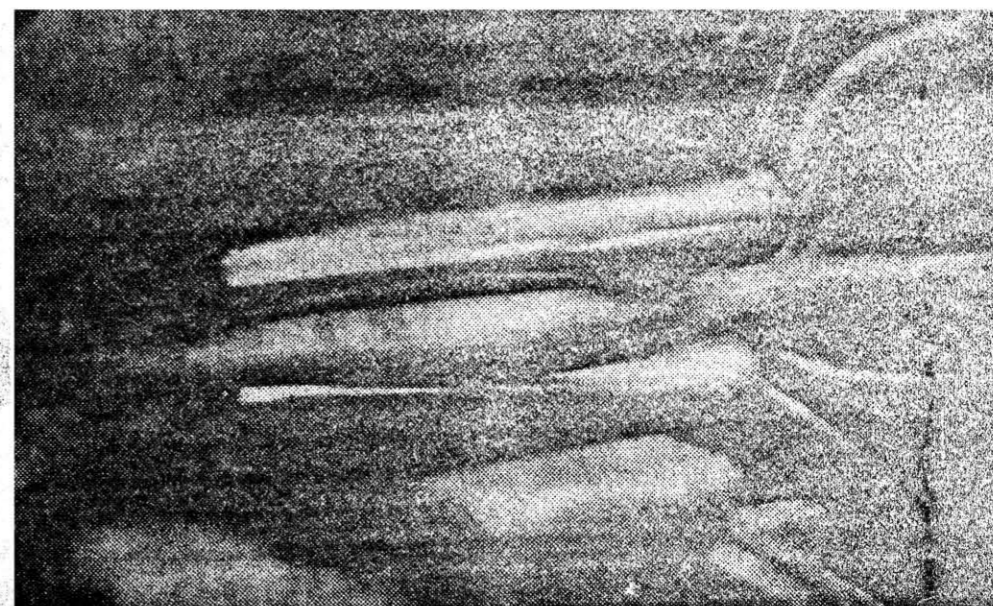
be swallowed by gullible motorists?

Many of the salespeople surveyed in California say they plan to test the devices or have only just installed them.

However, Louis Luciani of the Big R store in Klamath Falls, Ore., reported his truck's gasoline mileage has been increased by two miles per gallon since he installed cow magnets more than a month ago. In the Sacramento area, Lee Collier, owner of Collier and Sons Feed and Vet Supply in Roseville, said one customer, who owns an old pick-up truck, reported a 40 percent improvement in mileage on a recent deer-hunting trip.

The claims of cow magnets has even reached the Test and Evaluation division of the Environmental Protection Agency in Ann Arbor, Mich.

Although the federal agency has not done or plans to do any formal testing of the phenomenon, it labels cow



Fuel line is sandwiched between pair of magnets.