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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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MIST-DRINKING CATTLE?

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A story lately went the rounds of the press concerning herds of cattle in Hawaii that are said to drink no water. They live, we are told, on the slopes of Mauna Kea, where mists drifted by the trade winds deposit a copious supply of moisture on vegetation. The cattle are said to slake their thirst so fully by eating this damp vegetation that they not only need no drinking water but refuse it when offered to them.

The story, on the face of it, appears to be an interesting example of the utilization of "fog-drip." Moisture caught by plants from drifting fog and clouds is a valuable supplement to rainfall in many parts of the world. It is supposed, for example, to furnish at least a partial explanation of the fact that the so-called "dew ponds" on hilltops in southern England provide drinking water for sheep and cattle in time of drought.

The U. S. Bureau of Plant Industry has investigated the Hawaiian tale, which is partly true. It appears that non-drinking cattle exist in the region mentioned, though there is no evidence that any of them would refuse to drink if they had access to water. They doubtless get part of the moisture they need, at times, by eating fog-moistened plants. The principal reason, however, why they do not drink is that they eat succulent vegetation; especially cactus. One rancher feeds cactus to his horses, cattle, hogs and turkeys, and he claims that, with this food, they can get along indefinitely without drinking water.

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