

Branding Iron



Corby Ward,
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It's hard to believe we are in the new year already. It sure seems like 2025 went by fast. Overall, I think it was a good year. We saw things in the cattle industry that we've never seen before and, hopefully, this coming year is just as good or better.

A friend of mine used to work for a place in central Montana that ran a lot of yearlings. He took to carrying a rope with a breakaway hondo on it, so, when he got done doctoring, he could let the steer go easier. This worked out well for him for a couple summers, but, it only took one time of the hondo failing for him to stop carrying it while horseback.

My friend always wears a felt hat, and he has glasses. He had roped a steer in the late summer and, when the rope came tight, the hondo broke, causing the rope to snap back at him. The hondo split the brim of his hat, broke his glasses and cut him open above the

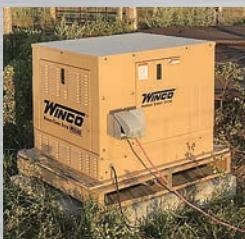
eyebrow. It knocked him out and off his horse. Apparently, between not having his glasses and bleeding, it was tough getting his horse caught and back to the barn. That was the last time he ever used a breakaway hondo.

I used to use a metal hondo on my ropes for a while. They had a little more weight, and they would loosen easier to let a critter have some air. It wasn't from a hondo failure, but from a rope breaking, that I stopped. I was entered in a ranch roping in Big Timber, Mont., and had a rope break. The rope broke right at the knot where the hondo was attached. I heard the hondo whistle past my horse and me. We found the hondo embedded in the wood planks of the arena. After seeing how deep it was in the wood, I decided I didn't want one hitting my horse or me, so I quit using them. I know that anything can fail and ropes break, but getting slapped with a rope seems like a better option than getting hit with a piece of metal.

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