

## Fifteen Hundred Head

Slim Dusty

Through the Mitchell Grass, half green he sees them  
feeding,  
In the lead a dusty horseman scans the plains,  
Fifteen hundred shorthorn steers are bound for  
Queensland,  
And he's back there on the Barkley route again.

Fifteen hundred bush bred steers in late September,  
Fifteen hundred miles they leave their home behind,  
For the dry days and the rushes in the land swoop,  
And the freezin' south east wind comes to his mind.

He can feel the freezin' saddle flaps at daybreak,  
He can taste the kind of breakfast drovers know,  
And the scares from saddle dees are on his knuckles,  
From some battle to stay mounted long ago.

Fifteen hundred reds and roans and broken baldies,  
Fifteen hundred demon nostrils wide with fright,  
Cracking timber, flying hooves and straining halters.  
Fifteen hundred peals of thunder in the night.

Fifteen hundred pairs of spreading horns and ear marks,  
Fifteen hundred mutes need, fifteen million stars,  
He is back there playing nursemaid on a night horse,  
But he's a prisoner in a prison with no bars.

Never more at dinner camp with Kort and Brownnett,  
But they don't serve Kort pot tea in Sydney clubs,  
Nevermore he'll walk the big mobs down the Rankin  
Or lead them through the Enniskillen scrubs.

Wake him gently when you sense his dream has ended,  
When those fifteen hundred march into the haze,  
Of the long, long years since he went down the Rankin,  
Just a strippling in the good old droving days.