Numeral modification of plural mass nouns

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Groceries 'grocery items', *clothes* and *cattle* lack singular counterparts and are reported as unmodifiable by small numerals. Alongside that, Allan (1980) reports *cattle* as modifiable by *500*, and the preceding nouns are attested as modified by small numerals. I argue that Allan's judgement of {#2, 500} cattle is key towards the mixed judgements towards 2 cattle. The analysis relies on: (i) The nouns license plural agreement, formalized with the morphosyntax of Cowper & Hall (2012), and (ii) The nouns range over disjoint individuals, formalized with Landman's (2020) semantic notion of neatness. Taken together, the preceding nouns are modifiable only by round numerals for certain speakers, and a certain morphosyntactic reanalysis leads them to be modifiable by all numerals.

Data. The existence of speakers who judge {#2, 500} cattle makes correct corpus predictions. In iWeb (Davies 2018–), six plural nouns without singular counterparts are modified by round numerals (multiples of 5) significantly more than inflectional plural (near-)synonyms: Cattle-cows, swine-pigs, livestock-farm animals, poultry-birds, fowl-birds and munitions-weapons.

Analysis. In [NP cattle] in (1a), # encodes individuation and modifies N, and >1 licenses plural agreement (*these cattle*; Cowper & Hall 2012). I posit that speakers who judge {#2, 500} cattle can embed [NP cattle] in a classifier phrase (CLP) headed by [CL \emptyset], which based on data from classifier languages is assumed to be compatible with 500 but not 2. Speakers who represent (1a) can produce 500 cattle, which addressees can represent as (1b), with # as a head rather than a modifier. This reanalysis is motivated by bias against covert elements like [CL \emptyset], plus [#>1] as a head as in (1b) is routine for nominals which license plural agreement (*cows*). (1) accounts for the mixed judgements towards 2 *cattle*, plus the generalization that round numerals are less subject to limited numeral modification



References: • Allan, K. (1980). Nouns and countability. *Language* 56(3), 541–567. • Cowper, E. & D. C. Hall (2012). In D. Massam (ed.), *Count and mass across languages*. Oxford: OUP, 25–42. • Davies, M. (2018–). *iWeb: The 14 billion word web corpus.* • Landman, F. (2020). *Iceberg semantics for mass nouns and count nouns*. Cham: Springer.