



4-H Parent Guide

4-H Beef Project

A Guide for Raising Beef

Selecting a Beef Project:

- **Market Steers.** This project lasts approximately nine months. Market steers are castrated beef animals that are shown by weight and evaluated by a combination of the traits, such as muscle, correctness of condition (finish), volume or body capacity, structural correctness and balance.
- **Breeding Beef.** These can be either a heifer or a bull. They must be registered with their respective breed organization. Rather than being evaluated on their muscling and carcass traits, they are evaluated on their breeding characteristics.



General Care and Management

Health Care

Sanitation

- Clean and disinfect housing and feeder regularly.
- Remove and replace wet bedding.

Internal Parasites

- Good sanitation prevents and controls worms.
- Deworm upon arrival and two other times a year.

External Parasites

- These include flies, mosquitos, ticks, mites and lice.
- Treat with appropriate insecticide.

When raising beef cattle, it is a good idea to have open communication with your breeder and a veterinarian for proper health management protocols.

Beef Facts

- Beef cattle have four parts to their stomach and can detect smells up to six miles away.
- The U. S. supplies 25% of the world's beef with only 10% of the world's cattle.
- The salivary glands of cattle, located beneath the tongue, produces 15-20 gallons of saliva per day.
- One cowhide can produce enough leather to make 20 footballs, 18 soccer balls, 18 volleyballs or 12 basketballs.

Exercise

As soon as the calf begins to lead, begin daily exercise. It is important to condition the animal and have it respond to the handler. Daily exercise should include feet placement. This will prepare your animal for the show ring.



Feeding Facts:

- Always keep clean, fresh water available.
- Feed on a routine schedule (twice daily at 6 a.m. and 6 pm; or three times daily at 6 a.m., noon and 6 p.m.).
- Start calves at .5% of body weight in concentrated feed and then incrementally increase fairly rapidly to full feed in 10-14 days.
- Remember that a calf can eat 2.5% of its body weight in dry matter each day.
- Avoid waste—feed offered but not cleaned up in 30 minutes should be removed.
- Feed roughage of at least 4-5 pounds of medium quality grass hay daily to keep calves on their feed and reduce their chances of digestive upsets.

Project Costs

Create a budget and stick to it!

1. **Cattle Cost.** Cattle can be purchased from local breeders or sales. Animal cost is based on current market price and goes up from there.
2. **Feed Cost.** This is a large but necessary expense in managing your animal for the show. An adequate amount of properly formulated diet or ration is essential to develop the genetic potential of show cattle.
3. **Shelter.** Shelter must be provided when raising cattle. It must consist of a cover and floor protection (such as shavings) from whipping rain, sun and wind.
4. **Animal Health.** Maintaining good health is an important part of an overall management plan. 4-H'ers should develop a relationship with their local veterinarian for advice on a health management program that includes recommended vaccinations for the area and protocols for managing external and internal parasites.

Housing

- Housing for show calves does not need to be expensive or elaborate, just comfortable.
- A roomy shed with a dirt floor close to a dry, well-drained lot is ideal.
- Provide 35-40 square feet of shelter per calf.
- Cover the dirt floor with a highly absorbent material or sand in the summer.
- Clean out soiled bedding daily.
- Provide cross-ventilation in the shed during the summer months.
- Allow a paddock of one-half acre per show calf for adequate grazing room.

Selection

- Set goals for the project, and choose an animal to achieve those goals.
- Be familiar with the different beef breeds and their purposes.
- Select beef animals that are structurally sound. Study the animal as it walks toward you and away from you.
- Keep project goals in mind when studying muscle. Market and breeding beef have different degrees of muscle.
- Search for the best beef cow for your budget. The most expensive cows are not always the best. You will not go out and buy a guaranteed champion. Develop your champion with hard work at home.



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Reference: 2013 LSU AgCenter Livestock Handbook; Texas4-h.tamu.edu; www.extension.purdue.edu



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