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Dairy Guidelines

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, V.P.I., BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA

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Your Animal Won't Win Without Your Help

C. E. Baylor, Assistant Extension Dairy Specialist

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SELECTING THE 4-H DAIRY ANIMAL

Much of the enjoyment, pride, and reward of having a dairy animal for a 4-H project comes from showing her in fairs and shows. Success in the show ring depends upon the 4-H club member's ability to select, fit, and train the animal. This is not easy because animals must be selected in the "rough" before any grooming or training can be done. A beginning 4-H member may wish to get his 4-H leader, Extension agent, or some breeder to help him select his first calf. However, valuable experience can be gained by observing how animals are fitted and shown and how placings are made at a show by the judge. As the member gains experience he can select his own animal. After securing the animal, she should be registered immediately in the 4-H member's name so he will be eligible to show her in all shows.

Points to Consider in Selecting an Animal

There are several things to consider when selecting a 4-H dairy project animal. The heifer should be:

1. Out of a registered dam with a high production record and sired by a bull that is proven for transmitting high production.
2. Out of an Excellent or Very Good dam and sired by a bull that has several Excellent or Very Good daughters.
3. Large for her age, with good length of body and neck, straight in her top line, straight rear legs, wide in her chest, sharp in the withers, and clean cut throughout.
4. Healthy, alert, and free of any apparent injuries or abnormalities. She should be purchased from an honest, reputable breeder who is interested in 4-H club members.
5. Purchased from disease-free herds only.
6. Born shortly after the base show dates so as to show to the best advantage. The base dates for most shows are January 1 and July 1; however, some shows split the junior and senior calf class on November 1. The 4-H member should check with the Cooperative Extension Agent, Agriculture about base dates for the shows.

FITTING THE DAIRY CALF FOR THE SHOW

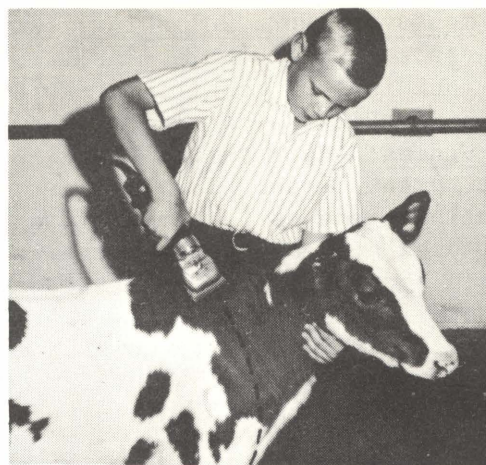
After the animal has been selected and brought home, she should be fed a ration which will keep her growing without making her too fat. (See Dairy Guidelines Series 285, "Developing Dairy Herd Replacements.") When she gets accustomed to her new home, the 4-H member should start working with her to get her ready for the show. Fitting cannot be done in a short time. A minimum of 6 weeks should be spent in fitting and training an animal for show. These steps should be followed:

1. Hoof Trimming: Animals with long, overgrown toes should have their hoofs trimmed 2 or 3 weeks before the show. Trim the points off the toes and cut a little off the sole but don't trim any off the heel. Too close trimming may cause lameness.
2. Haircoat: The haircoat must be soft, smooth, and free of excess, long, loose hair. Thorough brushing every day and frequent baths will accomplish this. Blanketing the animal will hasten shedding of loose hair, but she will still need regular brushing. After scrubbing thoroughly with a soft brush and plenty of soap, rinse well. Keep water out of the ears when washing. Wash the inside of the ears with a soft cloth soaked in rubbing alcohol to cut the wax. A slight amount of oil used on the haircoat just before the show will make it shine, but don't use too much. The judge will fault the contestant if he gets excessive oil on his hands.
3. Clipping: If the calf or heifer has had lots of brushing and is free of loose, long hair you will:

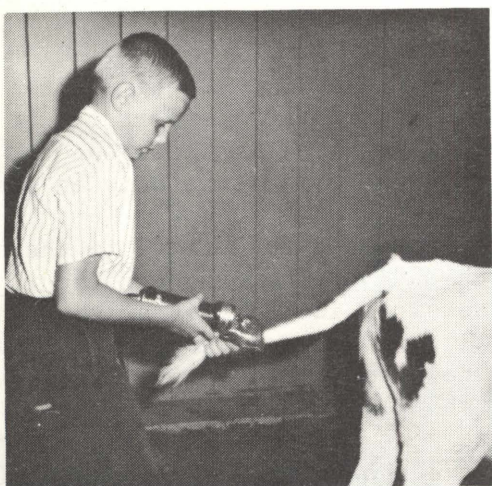


- A) On most animals clip only the head on a line from behind the poll and down under the jaw. (Figure 1)
- B) Leave the long hair on the muzzle.
- C) Clip both sides of the ear (it is permissible to leave inside hair long on Brown Swiss. This is called mustache cut.

- A) You should clip the neck of an animal when it:
 - a. Has long hair on the neck.
 - b. Tends to be short and heavy or thick in the neck.
- B) Clip the neck from the withers down to the point of the shoulders (along dotted line in Figure 2). Start a clipper width or 2 toward the head of the animal from where you wish to finish.
- C) Blend the long hair with the clipped hair (along dotted line in Figure 2) by clipping with the lay of the hair.



- A) Clip the tail from a point above the switch (Figure 3). This is usually 6 to 8" above the end of the tail bone, depending upon the size of the animal.



- A) Blend the short clipped hair of the tail with the longer hair of the tail head by clipping with the lay of the hair (Figure 4).
- B) Smooth the top line of the rump by leaving hair in the low spots and clipping the high spots.



Clipping Tips:

1. Brushing brings out natural oils, giving the hair coat a luster and making the hide more pliable.
2. Wash before clipping. But excessive washing removes natural oils.
3. If you are inexperienced at using clippers, practice on an animal you do not plan to show.
4. Clipping gives you an opportunity to do anything which will improve the appearance of an animal and allow it to show to advantage. Complete major clipping 10 days prior to the show. Touch-up clipping should be completed the day before showing.
5. Do not clip the underline of heifers. On cows in milk clip the underline to reveal the mammary vein.
6. Clipping against the lay of the hair gives a short or close cut.
7. Clipping with the lay of the hair removes less hair and is effective in blending clipped and unclipped areas.
8. Sandpaper is useful for blending clipped areas with unclipped.
9. Well-groomed showmen as well as well-groomed animals are an asset in the show ring.

4. Hoofs and Horn Polishing: If the animal has horns, both the horns and hoofs should be scraped smooth and polished. This should be done several days before the show to get them in good condition. Horns are discouraged and animals without horns are not discriminated against in the show ring.

5. Stains: Hair on the flank, switch, knees, and hocks may get stained and be difficult to get clean. This is particularly true of white haircoats. A dilute chlorine solution (same as for sterilizing dairy utensils) or bluing water made just a pale blue will bleach these spots to their natural color. Too much will discolor the hair. The switch should be braided or teased the day before the show and brushed out just prior to entering the show ring.

6. Filling the Udder: Cows in milk should show with a full, well-balanced udder. Milking about 10 to 15 hours prior to show time is usually sufficient time to fill an udder. Don't overfill. A distended, hard udder shows worse than one partially milked out.

TRAINING AND SHOWING

The animal must be trained to respond to the halter with a minimum of effort by the showman. How she acts in the show ring will reflect the amount of training she has received. A well-trained animal shown properly often means the difference between winning or losing.

1. Training To Lead: A rope halter can be used at first to tie the animal in the stall and teach her restraint. Then take her for a walk each day just before each feeding and she will soon look forward to her daily training session, for she learns she will be fed upon return. Leading her to water each day will give her additional training. This daily leading with a show halter, and posing her to stand properly is necessary to train her to respond. With patience and kindness, she will soon be posing just right to show up her good qualities as well as minimize some of her weaknesses.

2. In the Show Ring: Start showing before you enter the show ring. In the show ring you move in a clockwise direction. The show ring is not a wedding march or a horse race, so keep your animal moving so you do not crowd the animal ahead of you or hold up those behind you. A good showman is always alert, keeps his eye on the judge, and handles his animal well. He never leans on his animal or lets her head drop, and he controls her with one hand on the halter and the other on her neck just in front of the shoulder blade. The animal can be trained to move her feet back by gently pressing on the neck against the shoulder blade with the right hand while gently pulling back with the lead strap of the halter. Either the left hand or both hands on the lead strap is acceptable when leading forward. The showman should move forward by walking partially backward and sideways so as to see what is in front of him, be able to observe the judge, and see his animal at the same time. He should try to be inconspicuous and never over-show. Over-showing is distracting and draws attention away from the animal. The showman should make every effort to present his animal to the judge so that he always sees her at her best. Never let the animal relax while in the ring. Keep her standing squarely on her feet at all times when standing, and always keep her head up. If the animal has weak points, learn what these are and try to show her so they are not obvious.

3. Sportsmanship: In any show, there are always people who stand in places other than first. If you should be one of these, be a good sport about it. And, at the same time, try to learn why your animal didn't win. Was it a weakness of the animal? Could you have shown her to better advantage? Resolve to get a better animal and do a better job of fitting, training, and showing next year. You're sure to be a winner if you only keep trying!

4. After the show the judge will always appreciate a warm handshake and a "thank you" for a difficult job well done.