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4-H Market Beef (Grade School Age Group) : Extension Circular 2-60-2

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4-H Market Beef

(Grade School Age Group)

Extension Service
University of Nebraska College of Agriculture
And U. S. Department of Agriculture
Cooperating
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4-H MARKET BEEF...... by Dave C. Williams
Extension Animal Husbandryman

Introduction

Your Project Manual

This is your Market Beef Manual. It was written for you and other club members of grade school age.

Read the manual before you start your project. It will give you an idea of what you are expected to do.

Study the manual during the year. It will give you instructions in choosing, feeding, and caring for your calves.

A Successful Project

To have a good project, you should do these important things:

1. Study your manual so that you will know what to do.

2. Buy your calves in October or November when there are a lot of calves for sale.

3. Choose healthy, choice feeder calves that are of the right age and weight.

4. Feed a good ration made mostly of hay and grain grown on your farm.

5. Be a smart herdsman and see that your calves get the best of care.

6. Groom and show one or more calves at your county fair.

7. Keep a complete record of the things you do in your project work.
Selecting Project Calves

How Many Calves To Feed

Two or more calves fed together usually eat more than one fed alone. For this reason, you should feed more than one calf, unless you have a brother or sister who also is feeding a calf. Remember, you must keep records on your own calves.

When To Buy Club Calves

Club calves should be bought in October or November. You can find more good calves in these months because most feeder calves are sold in the fall. Calves that are to be exhibited at fairs need to be started on grain by the end of November.

Where To Buy Calves

Nebraska is called the "Beef State" because it has a lot of good beef cattle. There are many places in the state where you can buy project calves.

Here is a list of places where you might get good calves for your project.

1. From your dad's beef herd.
2. From a neighbor's beef herd.
3. From a cattle buyer.
4. From a livestock auction.
5. From a rancher in the range area (Sandhills).
6. From one of the many feeder calf sales in the state.
How Much To Pay For Club Calves

Learn to buy your calves for what they are worth. A good price to pay for calves is the price a cattle feeder would pay for them. Cattle feeders use market prices as a guide when they buy calves. You should also use market prices as a guide when you buy calves.

Know the market price for feeder calves before you and your dad go to buy your calves. It will help you decide how much to pay for your calves. Market prices for feeder calves are given on radio and TV farm programs. They are also listed in livestock market reports in most newspapers.

What Kind Of Calves To Buy

Choosing the right kind of feeder calf is important. One reason for the project is to give you training in choosing feeder calves.

You will want someone to help you pick your calves. This will probably be your dad. You should always go with your dad when he gets your calves. This will give you experience and help you learn how to select calves.

Feeder calves for the 4-H market beef project should be of choice or fancy grade. There are 5 grades of feeder calves. Fancy is the best grade and choice is next.

The important parts of a calf are shown in the drawing. Learn each part and where it is located on the calf.
Project calves should be of the right age and weight. Steer calves selected in October or November should have been born in April or May. Choose steer calves that weigh 375 to 450 pounds. Heifer calves should have been born in May or June and weigh 300 to 350 pounds when selected. Calves bought after November will need to be older and heavier.

CHAPTER 2 Care of your Calves

When one calf is trucked alone, he should be haltered and tied. Tie his halter lead about 18 inches above the truck bed. Allow enough lead rope so he can lie down and rest. Tying the calf for the trip will help to gentle him.

Getting Calves Used To Their New Home

Once you get your calves home, unload them gently and move them quietly to their stall. The stall should be dry and bedded with clean straw.

For the next week, let the calves stay in their stall and rest. Getting to be friends with your calves is your first job in training them. When you visit their stall, talk to them so that they will get used to your voice. Never do anything to frighten your calves or to make them angry.

Feed your calves only hay and water until they are used to their new home. Give them fresh water every day and let them have all the hay they will eat. Feed good prairie or bromegrass hay, but not alfalfa hay. Alfalfa hay at this time will cause the calves to scour or bloat.
Halting a Calf Early

When a calf is used to his new home, he should be haltered and gentled. "Halter breaking" means to get the calf used to wearing a halter and to stand quietly when he is tied. It is done by haltering the calf and tying him in his stall for a few days.

"Halter breaking" is an important part of a calf's training. It should always be done within two weeks after you bring the calf home.

Teaching the Calf to Lead

After the calf is halter broken, teach him to lead. At first, the calf will give you trouble. He will balk and then try to get away. Have your dad help you until the calf leads well enough for you to handle it. Do not let the calf get away because he will try it again and again. Be gentle but firm with the calf.

Start the training by leading your calf to places that he wants to go. Lead him to his bunk at feeding time or to his water trough when he is thirsty. Then turn him loose. Do this for a few days and he will begin to lead.

When your calf has learned to lead, take him outside of his exercise lot. Lead him to strange places. Talk to the calf as you lead him. This will assure him that everything is all right. Ask other people to handle him. He needs to learn that strangers will not harm him.

Teaching the calf to stop is another important part of his training. The proper way to stop the calf when you are leading him is to:

1. Turn toward him.
2. Turn his head to one side.
3. Push back a little on his halter lead.

Do not try to stop the calf by trying to push harder against him than he does against you. Remember, the calf is a lot bigger than you.
Housing and Equipment

CHAPTER 3

Housing for Your Calves

Housing for your calves should be simple and comfortable. It must be cool in the summer and protect the calves from winds and storms in the winter.

A shed open to the south may be used for housing your calves. You may also use a stall in a barn that is free from drafts. Do not keep your calves in a tightly closed barn. A tightly closed barn is usually damp and unhealthy for your calf.

Feeding Equipment

Feed bunks for calves should be about 18 inches off the ground. Grain and chopped hay may be fed from the same bunk, if the grain is fed first. However, loose hay is usually fed in a hayrack.

A mineral box should be built inside the shed or stall. A box 12 inches square and 6 inches deep is big enough for several calves. A good mineral supplement can be made by mixing salt and steamed bone meal. Mix one pound of salt with each pound of bone meal. Always keep supplement in the box for the calves to eat.

Calves should have clean, fresh drinking water every day. Two good water troughs can be made from a 55-gallon metal oil barrel. Cut the barrel around the middle with a hack saw. Then file off the sharp edges. Before using, give each trough a good cleaning to remove all of the oil.

Never let the water trough overflow. In case it does, have the trough located where water will drain out of the lot. Do not let mud holes form in the lot.

Exercise Lot

Your calves will need an exercise lot next to the shed or barn. Exercise is important for club calves. It gives them a better appetite and builds good leg muscles.

A lot that is 20 by 50 feet is large enough for 5 or 6 calves. If the lot is too big, your calves will run more than they should. They will also be hard to catch. A nervous calf may become wild in a large lot. If the lot is too small, the calves will not get enough exercise.

Keep the stall or shed clean and dry at all times. Use straw for bedding in winter months. A 4- to 6-inch layer of sand may be used for bedding in the summer. Calves do better when they have a good place to lie down after eating.
CHAPTER 4 Some Facts about Feeds

Concentrates and Roughages

There are two classes of livestock feeds:

1. **Concentrates**: feeds that are high in food value and low in fiber.

2. **Roughages**: bulky feeds that are low in food value and high in fiber. Beef cattle can use roughages in their rations because they have four stomachs.

Concentrates Used In Fattening Rations

**Corn** is the most popular grain for fattening cattle. It can be fed as the only grain in a ration. Ground ear corn is good for fattening calves.

**Milo** is another popular grain. It has a little less food value than corn. Milo can also be used as the only grain in a ration.

**Oats** is a good grain for starting calves on grain. You may leave 1 or 2 pounds of oats in the ration after calves are on full feed.

**Barley** produces good grains but should not be used for more than one-half of the concentrate. Very little barley is grown in Nebraska.

**Wheat Bran** adds bulk to the ration and makes it taste better. It is often used to start calves on feed.

**Protein Supplements** are concentrate feeds that are high in protein. They are used to make up for the protein shortage in corn and other grains. Soybean meal is a good protein supplement.

Roughages Used In Fattening Rations

**Alfalfa Hay** has more food value than other roughages but it sometimes causes bloat. When good alfalfa hay is fed, little or no protein supplement is needed in the ration.

**Prairie Hay** is the best grass hay for beef cattle. Many herdsmen consider it the best roughage for feeding show cattle. A supplement must be fed when prairie hay is used because it is low in protein.

**Bromegrass Hay** is much like prairie hay in feeding value. It is also low in protein. A protein supplement must be used when bromegrass is fed.

**Silage** can be used as the roughage for 4-H calves. However, too much silage during the summer will cause a calf to have a large stomach at fair time. For this reason, it is best to change to hay during the summer.
CHAPTER 5 Feeding Calves

Getting The Calf On Full Feed

When your calf is used to his new home, start him on a fattening ration. Here are some rules that you may use in getting your calf on full feed:

**Starting Ration**

1. Feed all the hay your calf will eat. Good prairie or bromegrass hay should be used while your calf is starting on feed. If you wish, you can change to mixed or alfalfa hay in a week or two.

2. Feed one pound of oats or ground ear corn the first day. Add 1/4 pound more to the ration each day for a week.

3. Start feeding a mineral supplement on the first day. Feed the minerals in a box so the calf can eat them anytime he wishes. Keep a fresh supply of minerals in the box at all times.

**After A Week**

1. After your calf has been eating oats for a week, you can start adding protein supplement and corn or milo to his ration.

2. Decide on the amount of protein supplement needed in the ration. Add a little supplement at each feeding so that all of it is being fed in 3 days.

3. Add 1 pound of corn or milo every 4 days until it takes the calf about 30 minutes to eat all of his concentrate at each feeding.

**Now Add Corn Or Milo**

1. Continue to add corn or milo to the ration, but at a slower rate.

2. Add 1 pound of corn or milo every 10 days until your calf is on full feed. If you add grain faster, you may cause him to go "off feed."

3. Your calf will be on full feed when he takes about 1 hour to eat his grain and supplement at one feeding. He will be eating about 2 pounds of concentrate each day for every 100 pounds that he weighs.

4. It will take about 6 weeks to get a calf on full feed.
What If The Calf Goes Off Feed?

Your calf may go "off feed" and refuse to eat all of his concentrate. If this happens you can get him back on feed again this way:

1. Cut out half of the concentrate part of the ration.

2. Give the calf all the hay that he will eat.

3. Feed one-half the regular amount of concentrate until the calf starts eating good again.

4. Then, increase the concentrate for three days so that the calf is back to within one pound of the amount that he ate before he went off feed.

5. Gradually increase the amount of concentrate until the calf is back on full feed.

Fattening Rations

Here are some daily fattening rations that can be used for 500-pound calves on full feed. Choose a ration that has the kind of grain and hay grown on your farm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ration No. 1</th>
<th>Pounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corn or milo</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soybean meal</td>
<td>1 1/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early cutting prairie hay</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ration No. 3</th>
<th>Pounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rolled corn or milo</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soybean meal</td>
<td>1/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good alfalfa hay</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ration No. 2</th>
<th>Pounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corn or milo</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oats or barley</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soybean meal</td>
<td>1 1/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early cutting prairie hay</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ration No. 4</th>
<th>Pounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corn or milo</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oats or barley</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soybean meal</td>
<td>1/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good alfalfa hay</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ration No. 5</th>
<th>Pounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ground ear corn</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soybean meal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good alfalfa hay</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grain should be rolled or ground as coarse as possible for calves. Ground grain is easier to digest than whole grain. But, calves do not like grain that is ground fine and dusty.

Feed your calves twice each day. It is important that you feed them at the same time each morning and evening.
When you show your calf, you will want him to look his best. For this reason, you should learn how to train and groom calves.

**Training Calves For Show**

Start training your calves soon after you get them. A young calf will be easier for you to train than a large, older one.

In training calves for show, teach them these four things:

1. To lead.
2. To stop.
3. To stand.
4. To back up.

**Grooming Calves For Show**

A calf always looks better if he is well-groomed. Washing, curling, brushing, and clipping are things that you should learn about grooming.Trimming the feet is important too, but you will learn this lesson when you are older.

**Instructions On Training And Grooming**

Instructions on training and grooming calves are given in your fitting and showing manual. You should already have the manual. If you do not, ask your leader to get it for you.