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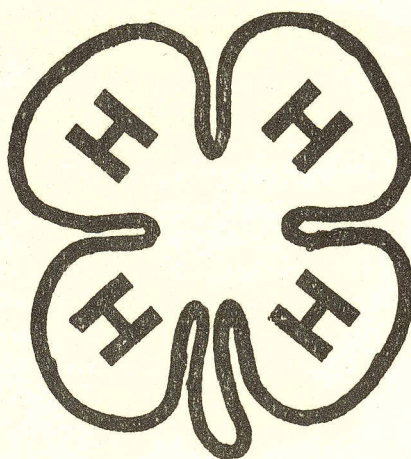
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Stocker Feeder Club

EXTENSION SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
AND U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COOPERATING
W. V. LAMBERT, DIRECTOR

C.1

Problem I

The Purpose of the Club

The Stocker-Feeder project is intended to bring young ranchers 10 to 20 years of age together in 4-H clubs under the leadership of successful ranchers. It is particularly adaptable for boys and girls living on ranches or farms where grazing cattle is the chief means for making a living. Nebraska's grazing section, including the Sandhills as well as hard land lying mostly in the north and west part of the state is unexcelled for ranching. The cattle of the areas of the section are sold mostly as stockers and feeders to be finished in the Platte Valley or in the Corn Belt where feed grains are cheaper and more abundant. This project provides a study of the problems and practices of successful ranchers as well as competition in project and general 4-H club activities.

Plan of the Project

The club member starts with a cow and her calf. He cares for and keeps a record of feed, days on pasture, and expenses for at least 120 days. The cow is dropped from the record when the calf is weaned. The records on the calf are kept until the calf is sold, or for 30 days after weaning. The calf is to be trained to lead and to eat grain. This very briefly outlines the project requirements.

It may sound brief and simple but a program well carried out to meet this project will command the respect of any one properly evaluating the job. Rarely is the procedure appreciated fully until it has been done. Keeping a calf coming while on pasture; providing for vaccination, dehorning, castration, branding and fly control; weaning it, training it to lead, grooming and training for show,--presenting it in the showring with a full, well balanced middle and not bawling two days and miles from home,--these phases of this project will intrigue and challenge the club member as well as his parents and leader.

The Cow and Calf

It is only natural that a boy or girl should want the best prospect the herd affords. Since no calf should be kept alone,--as might be necessary at weaning time--it is better to have two or more calves in a project in one family. If there be but one club member, then select at least two calves. When there are more, select at least one for each and plan on keeping the calves together from weaning time on. In any case the selection should be made by the time the calf is a month of age. Since most club projects are timed to meet the program of some particular event, the minimum time needed to complete the project should be considered.

If each boy could run his cow or cows separately, the matter of caring for them and keeping a feed record would be easy. In most cases the cows will run with the herd. The club member should do his share in caring for the herd, taking part in each job. The amount and value of all the feed going to the herd would go into the record. This can be divided by the size of the herd to find the feeding cost for the club member's cow or cows. This amount will, of course, be taken from the proceeds of the sale of the calf and paid whoever furnished the feed. In the same way a record of the time spent in care of the herd will be divided by the number of head to find the time spent in care of the club member's cow. While the club member will probably have spent much more than this time in helping with the herd and his father may not wish to charge him for labor, the value of this labor will be entered in the record book as part of the cost of producing a calf.

Problems in herd management confront the cattleman the year around. Some clubs also wish to meet all during the year. Other topics presented for club members in this project are to assist in meeting herd management problems as they may occur any time of the year.

No attempt will be made to completely cover the field of this project in this circular. Information on special assignments may be secured from publications available at the county extension office.

The "4-H Beef Club Manual," Ext. Cir. 2-61-2 and "Fitting and Showing Meat Animals," Ext. Cir. 0-23-2 provides the information on several topics. Look to them for

Names of the Parts of the Steer
Calf Selection
Handling the Calf
Diseases and Parasites
Training to Lead
Halters and Horns
Ear Tagging
Feet Trimming
Washing and Curling
Clipping
Preparation at Home for Show and Sale
Equipment
Shipping
After Arrival at the Fair
Showmanship

Problem II

The Calf's Dam

Some club members may have the opportunity to select cows long before calving time, from their parent's herd or that of another. Knowing that "like begets like" it is well to find out all one can about the ancestry of the cow. Any knowledge of the productive ability of her family will be appreciated. Ranchers and breeders may help in the selection and extend the benefit of their experience in this respect.

Next would be the desirability of the individual. Health, breed markings, probable calving date being satisfactory, the cow herself comes in for closer scrutiny. An alert but not restless animal is wanted. Now for Type.--Relatively speaking, she should be deep in body, thick in body and set low to the ground. A short fore shank indicates low setness even though the animal be thin. With these important points settled, the cow should be smooth--her short neck blending smoothly into shoulders well laid in--hips should be reasonably smooth, the quarter long from hip to pinbone, and all the neatness about the rump possible is wanted. The thigh or quarters should let well down to the hocks. Fleshing should indicate its thickness and evenness in the way it is laid on.

The head should be attractive in conformation as well as in expression.--Short and wide of face, open of nostril and broad in muzzle, clean cut--feminine--rugged but not coarse. If she is attractive, there must be reasons.

Problem III

Management

The winter is one of the most important times in your cow's life. She must have a ration which will not only take care of her needs but will also develop a calf. If her feed is low in protein or minerals she will have to take them from her own body for the calf. A poor ration may prevent her getting in shape to feed her calf well and may cause the calf to be small, weak, or be born dead.

Sunshine, exercise, fresh water, and suitable shelter must be considered. Almost as many cattle fail to show a profit because they are not provided one or more of these as fail to show a profit because they are not properly fed. Thoughtful and regular care, with inexpensive equipment are essential in providing these favorable conditions for cattle.

Calving

Cows, especially first calf heifers, should be up where they can be watched and if necessary helped as calving approaches. In cold weather or when sudden storms may occur, a warm box stall should be provided for calving. Cows should always calve away from the herd. If any irregularity occurs, at or following calving, a competent veterinarian should be called. If calving is not normal in every way, the cow and calf should be kept away from the herd until all discharge ceases, then the calving place should be cleaned and disinfected.

Economical Rations

To be profitable, beef cattle need to be raised largely on feed otherwise of little value. The grass of the Nebraska grazing areas would be largely unmarketable but for the livestock used to convert it to a form in which it can be presented in trade. Stubble field growth, cornstalk fields, straw, and hay or pasture from land not well suited to crops may be available in some areas. Crops which produce a large amount of feed per acre such as temporary pasture and silage crops may also furnish cheap cattle feed. Such feeds supply energy for warmth and to keep up body weight but, except growing pasture, are usually very low in protein and mineral. These protein and mineral requirements will have to be met in some other feed.

Minerals

Salt is needed by cattle regardless of the ration. Usually no other mineral is needed by cattle on pasture or when legume hay is fed. Pasture or hay grown in the sand-hills area of Nebraska may be low in phosphorus and calcium because the soil of that area is low in these minerals. Many ranchmen feel cattle should have steamed bone meal available to supply phosphorus and calcium in this area. Cotton cake, if fed freely enough will supply some phosphorus but not calcium--which can be supplied more cheaply by feeding ground limestone than by steamed bone meal if the phosphorus is not needed. A mixture of 2 parts ground limestone, 2 parts odorless steamed bone meal and 1 part salt by weight put within reach of cattle under shelter where wind will not spread it or rain cake it, should provide them with any needed mineral at a low cost. It is preferable to have a two-compartment mineral feeder. Put the mixture in one compartment and salt in the other. A great deal of information is put out from various sources about "trace" minerals--those that may be needed in very small amounts. Research so-far on mineral needs on Nebraska ranges has not proven their need but if desired they may be added to the mixture. Very small amounts of the mixture will be consumed but that small amount is important and provides insurance against mineral deficiencies at low cost.

Proteins

Five pounds of alfalfa daily will provide the protein needed in addition to the common cheap roughages and will meet mineral and possible vitamin needs besides. One pound of choice cotton cake supplies about the same amount of protein as 3 pounds of alfalfa and may be cheaper. Soybean meal seems about equal to cotton cake pound for pound. Soybean meal is lower in phosphorus than cotton cake and so may produce disappointing results unless the ration has sufficient phosphorus. Linseed meal is another source of protein but is usually fed in mixtures. Mixtures usually are preferable to one kind of protein. Pellets or "cubes" are desirable forms for feeding these supplements, the latter particularly preferable in feeding on the range.

Grain

Cows do not need to be fat at calving time but should be in good thrifty flesh if they are to feed their calf as they should. The right kind of cow will need little or no grain before calving if the pastures have been good and the winter ration generous and well balanced. Nebraska ranchmen have had good results by feeding 2 pounds of corn or cracked rye daily or 1 pound of grain and 1/2 pound of cotton cake with the native hay or winter pasture. Such winter feeding will without doubt be more than repaid by increased weight of calves and cows and freedom from breeding and calf raising troubles which are often so closely related to poor feeding. If pastures have been poor and cattle have gone down in flesh, some grain will be needed in a cow's winter ration unless such choice roughage as silage is fed.

Breeding Cattle on Pasture

"The common practice in breeding beef cattle is to turn the bull or bulls out with the cows, allowing 1 bull for from 20 to 40 cows, depending on the size and kind of pasture and the age and activity of the bull. When the bull is kept separate from the cows, about twice as many can be bred per bull. This practice is especially desirable when the calves are kept separate from the cows and the cows are brought up twice a day for the calves to nurse. The shy breeders can be weeded out about 6 mos. sooner by keeping the bull in the pen, marking the cows, and keeping a record of breeding dates or by separating the bred cows from those not bred.

"With a large herd of several hundred cows, much may be saved by eliminating shy breeders promptly. The saving results from reducing the investment in bulls and their keep, and from producing a more uniform calf crop. In the case of large herds it may pay to have a man stay with the herd every day for from 6 to 8 weeks and bring the cows up to the bull pens for breeding. By this method a good bull may average getting 75 to 100 calves per year. By getting rid of the shy breeders immediately or as soon as they are put in good condition, one has more feed and room for the cows in calf.

"When cows are free of abortion disease, they should be allowed to calve on pasture as conditions there are usually more favorable and sanitary than in or around barns and lots. Cows affected with abortion disease should not be allowed to calve on pastures occupied by healthy stock. One or more small pastures, which save time in watching the cows to see whether they need any help, is valuable. Putting cows about to calve in such pastures is also a good practice with respect to heavy milking beef cows, which need attention until the calves can take all the milk. It is especially important that hogs, horses and mules be kept out of pastures where cows are calving.

On farms having large pastures of several hundred acres which are not well supplied with water, shade, and good forage, there are advantages in keeping the calves on a small pasture which is well supplied in these respects. As the cows come in twice a day for the calves to nurse, the condition of all the cattle can be carefully watched each day." —U. S. D. A. Misc. Pub. 194.

Problem IV

Pastures

The food of cattle to be taken by grazing is called pasture. The grazing of cattle kept only for beef is one of the simplest, easiest, and most economical methods of getting a marketable agricultural product from the soil on an extensive scale. When cattle have adequate feed, water, and salt, they may practically take care of themselves the year round on pasture or range. During most of the time one man can readily care for from 500 to 1000 beef cattle. Extra help, of course, is necessary for such operations as a round-up to brand, dehorn, castrate, vaccinate, dip or spray, sort and market.

The principal grazing problem in handling cattle is that of extending the grazing season to reduce the quantity of harvested feed required. In general, the costs of winter feed for from 4 to 6 months are from 2 to 4 times as great as the cost of grazing for a period of from 6 to 8 months. To extend the grazing season most effectively, one must have more than one pasture in order to save ungrazed forage for grazing in midsummer, late fall, winter or early spring.

In a farming area temporary annual pastures, such as Sudan grass, sweet clover, lespedeza, and winter wheat, barley or rye, may be used to supplement permanent pastures. With some of these crops it is possible to begin grazing from 2 to 4 weeks earlier in the spring. They provide an abundance of feed during July and August when bluegrass and other pasture grasses are dormant, and extend the period of good grazing from 4 to 8 weeks in the fall and early winter. The acreage of such temporary pastures as Sudan grass and sweet clover should be only one-fourth to one-third of the area of good permanent pasture on account of the greater carrying capacity of the temporary pasture for short periods. The acreage of cereal crops will depend on whether they are for grazing alone or for grazing and grain production.

Other important considerations in the grazing of cattle on farms are water supply, salt, minerals, shade, and in the case of fattening steers and cows being milked, supplementary feed.

The kind and quantity of supplementary feeds given to cattle on pasture require considerable study (1) to make certain they are profitable, because the nutrients obtained from pasture are usually much cheaper than those from harvested feeds; (2) to have the supplement adapted to the purpose for which the cattle are being kept; and (3) to have the supplement improve the physiological effect of the grass. Immature grass is rather rich in protein, being equivalent to some protein concentrates.

As the grass becomes mature and the protein content of its dry matter approaches that of grain, the supplement should include some feed rich in protein, such as oil-mill by-products. The purpose is to maintain the proper ratio between the proteins and carbohydrates in the ration. For milk production and growing animals proportionately more protein and also more mineral in the ration are necessary than for fattening cattle. Also the protein requirements of young fattening cattle are greater than those of older cattle.

At the beginning of the growing period the moisture content of young grass is high. The dry-matter content is about 20 per cent and consists of a relatively high percentage of protein and ash and a low percentage of crude fiber. It is often advisable to give cattle and sheep some supplementary feed at this period of the grazing season counteract, to some extent, the laxative effect of the lush grass. In such cases the best supplement is some non-laxative roughage such as grass hay or straw, which gives to the ration bulk that is effective in slowing up the passage

of the contents through the digestive system and thereby allows time for the absorption of nutrients. In turning cattle on such feed the transition should be gradual, beginning with an hour or two of pasture each day, depending largely upon supplementary feeds.

During periods of drought when the grass is brown and dry, or in the fall or winter when the forage is mature and bleached out, it is desirable to feed some laxative supplement such as linseed or soybean meal or green leafy alfalfa hay. The laxative feed is needed since the forage in the condition mentioned is largely crude fiber with relatively little protein and ash.

Pasture management should include the idea of conservation to prevent soil erosion as well as loss of grass production.

Problem V

Discussion of Feeds

Feeds may be divided into two general classes namely, concentrates and roughages. A concentrated feed contains a high per cent of digestible material while roughage contains a small per cent and are "bulky". Both concentrates and roughages may be divided into two classes, high protein and, low protein or carbohydrate.

Concentrates

Protein

Protein builds the muscles and is the primary basis of bone. It is also the real substance of the hair and hoof and is therefore of utmost importance. It produces growth and repair and is necessary for production of milk. Growth is secured by developing bone and muscle. Repair is building up of tissues that are being constantly worn out by exercise and work. Milk contains a high percentage of protein and therefore protein feeds are necessary to secure milk production.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates, the starches and sugars, produce heat and energy. They build fatty tissue when consumed in excess of these needs. A portion of the carbohydrates is used in cold weather to maintain the heat of the body. More starchy feeds are needed in winter than in summer. Energy or work requires starchy feeds. When needs are supplied for growth, heat, energy and repair, the surplus is stored in the form of body fat.

Fat as found in various feeds will produce heat and energy, and will build up body fat.

GRAIN, CONCENTRATES AND MOLASSES

Low-Protein Grains and Molasses - Rich in energy (fattening) value, but low in protein. Should be fed with a high-protein roughage or a high-protein concentrate.

Corn (in any form)	Millet seed
Wheat	Cane
Barley	Sorgo
Molasses	Kafir corn
Oats	Hominy feed
Rye	

Molasses fed in quantities of 2 or 3 pounds per head daily will probably replace a similar amount of corn for horses or cattle. Fed in larger amount (6 - 8 pounds), molasses is considered to be approximately 80 per cent as valuable as corn. Cane molasses is more desirable than beet molasses.

Medium-Protein Grains or Concentrates - Concentrated feed and running higher in protein than in low protein grains or molasses.

Bran	Soybeans
Shorts	Cowpeas
Soybeans ground	Beans ground

High-Protein Concentrates - High in protein - used to supplement grain, or low-protein roughages.

Tankage	Soybean meal or cake
Meat meal	Soybean cubes
Cottonseed meal or cake	Corn gluten meal
Linseed meal or cake	Peanut meal

Tankage and meat meal are the two most valuable high-protein concentrates. They contain approximately one-third more protein than any of the others. One pound of tankage or meat meal will replace approximately one and one-half pounds of other concentrates as a source of digestible protein. Any of the others may be used interchangeably, all of them being of practically the same value, pound per pound.

In feeding protein concentrates, put out about 1 pound for stock cattle or idle horses 2/10 pound for sheep, and 4/10 pound for hogs, per head daily. Can be fed in bunks by themselves, or mixed with grain. Cake is often fed on the sod in the range areas where bunk feeding isn't practical. If cake is too hard, this objection may be overcome by grinding through an ordinary feed mill. Tankage may be sprinkled over silage or other feed for cattle.

Skim milk would be listed under protein concentrates. Although it is over 90% water it is distinctly a protein feed and one of the best that can be used. Milk is almost indispensable to a club boy or girl in growing out a calf. Milk is often times the easiest feed for a club member to use to balance up a grain ration.

Linseed Meal is the product left in the manufacture of linseed oil from flaxseed. It is high in protein and may be used to balance a ration. Ordinarily it is too expensive. It is laxative and has the property of producing a glossy coat.

Cottonseed cake is a by-product of cottonseed. It is a highly concentrated feed. It is best for cattle above one year old and fits in nicely with almost any ration. Cottonseed cake is rather high in phosphorus.

Bran is used in growing out calves. It is an excellent feed and is usually fed with oats and corn. It is bulky and laxative. The price of bran is often high.

Corn is the foundation for nearly all rations in the Corn Belt. However in growing calves an excessive use of it tends to retard the growth of muscle and bone and will cause the calves to become too fat.

Corn and cob meal is the kernel and cob ground up together. This is excellent feed for cattle if cob is not too coarse. Its chief advantage is that, because of its bulk, it is less likely to cause digestive disturbances when added to a ration than corn is. It is used only for cattle, horses and sheep as it is too bulky for hogs.

Gluten meal is a product of factories where starch is made from corn. It is rich in digestible protein and is well liked by cattle.

Oats. It will be noticed that oats are placed under low-protein feeds although they contain a little more protein than corn. They are one of the most widely used grains, being especially good for growing calves since they cause growth rather than fattening. Oats may be fed whole, ground or mixed with other feeds. They are higher in protein than corn and are very good feed for cattle on account of their bulk, although they may be expensive.

Barley is a very good concentrate especially if mixed with oats. It should be ground. Barley is used quite extensively this way. It is rich in carbohydrates and has slightly more protein than corn.

Rye is usually plentiful in sandy areas. It is proving to be a very satisfactory grain for breeding cattle. It should be coarsely ground.

ROUGHAGES

Low-Protein Roughage - These roughages contain only a small amount of protein and, therefore, must be supplemented with a high-protein roughage, or a protein concentrate to keep the animal alive and thrifty. The following feeds may be classed as low-protein roughages.

Several of the feeds in this class, such as fodder or other coarse feeds, will be much better if ground. The grinding will eliminate considerable waste, increase palatability, and facilitate mixing with other feeds.

Prairie hay	Corn fodder	Oat feed
Winter range	Cane fodder	Cottonseed hulls
Foxtail hay	Sorghum fodder	Corn silage
Timothy hay	Peterita fodder	Cane silage
Oat hay	Millet hay	Sunflower silage
Russian thistle hay	Cane hay	Beet pulp (wet)
Wheat straw	Sudan hay	

High-Protein Roughage - contains sufficient protein and other nutrients to meet the needs of the animal. Because of their cost, they should be used sparingly. Four pounds per head daily, if fed with a low-protein roughage, will sustain cattle or horses, although 5 to 8 pounds daily will promote more thrift or growth. Here are some common high protein roughages:

Alfalfa hay or meal	Soybean hay
Clover hay	Sweet clover hay
	Rape hay

Growing pasture is also classed as a high protein roughage.

Water

Water is essential and more of it is taken into the animal's body than any other one thing. It supplies the necessary liquid for all tissues and fluids of the body. The passage of water through the organs of the calf aids in regulating body temperature. It aids digestion, circulation and in the removal of waste. If the calf does not get all the water he needs he will let up on his exercise. The calf must have exercise to grow as he should.

Minerals

Salt. Salt is necessary to sustaining life. About 2 ounces per head should be available for cattle. Salt should be within easy reach of livestock at all times.

Ground limestone. Limestone supplies calcium and should be fed with rations not containing a high protein roughage.

Bone meal is needed with the same general type of rations as with limestone, or in areas where soil phosphorus is low.

A good mineral mixture is: Bone meal 2 parts, ground limestone 2 parts, and salt 1 part - may be fed to all classes of farm animals. Feed salt in addition. A feeder with the mixture in one compartment and salt in the other is desirable.

PROBLEM VI

Preparation for Show or Sale

The objective in preparation of the stocker-feeder calf for presentation in the ring at halter for show or sale is a calf:

1. thrifty, well-grown for his age
2. clean and well groomed
3. showing a balanced fill
4. not bawling for his dam
5. showing training through response to his showman in posing and in moving. Attainment of these goals insures respect for the stocker-feeder project by the exhibitor, sponsors and patrons of the show or sale. You, as a club member, will need a program well carried out to attain these goals.

Your calf has been following his dam in the pasture with the herd. About four, and not less than three weeks before the show you plan to make, your cow and calf should be taken from the herd and the cow put with the milk cows so she will be in the yards each morning and night. Keep the calf up but he should have company in case you do not have more than one calf in your project. At first the cow may spend the nights with her calf. If the calf has not been creep-fed at pasture, start him on a light grain feed now. (Buyers rather like calves that are ready to eat). When he is taking bright, clean, prairie hay and grain, with water always available, allow him to nurse only mornings and night. If you wish to preserve a good lustre to the coat your calf should stay in the shade in day time.

The next step in your program should be to train your calf to lead. Emphasis should be on training with the idea of winning the confidence of your calf and not on 'breaking' him.. The latter implies overpowering or restraining the calf without his willing response. Have your calf penned or caught up when his mother comes in morning and evening for him to nurse. Halter him, preferably using a rope halter well fitted. Now, in taking your calf to his mother, use the halter in guiding as you drive him. Do not try to lead him. After he has nursed, remove the halter. After a few feeds, vary the route but end up each time at his dam.

After your calf respects the halter, tie him up for a couple of hours when you can be near to see that he doesn't choke himself. Yearlings or older cattle will fight a halter rope for two days before they accept it. Your calf, under this program, may take less.

The experience of going to nurse at halter and that of accepting the halter in being tied, particularly of going to nurse from being tied should make the next step easier. Now start to lead him where you want to go. If your calf now has confidence in you he may want to go along. Ext. Cir. 0-23-2, "Fitting and Showing" Meat Animals", pages 15 and 16 points out the steps for you to observe in training your calf that he may go into a strange showing without shrinking due to nervousness and upsetting the desired balanced fill.

The goal in the appearance of the coat is natural luxuriousness. It is secured by cleanliness and lustre to the coat. The steps in washing are given on pages 7 and 8 of E.C. 0-23-2. Since it was written, detergents have become common. They are good cleansing agents and do not appear to cause dandruff. But use them quickly and not often for they remove much of the natural secretions of the skin and leave the

hair dull. Follow this circular for washing and curling hair. One good washing before leaving home with a less vigorous one at the show should be enough. Frequent brushing and curling will best train the hair. Do not use, excessively, oils for lustre. The hair soon loses its 'life'.

E.C. 0-23-2 will tell you about clipping heads and tails (p. 13). Do not clip tail heads. The coxcomb (hair standing up) should be trimmed but that is all. Blend in from between the pin bones. When the tailhead is clipped it has a shortening effect to the distance from the hip to the pin bones. This does more damage than any possible gain in clipping the tail head. Page 18, par. 3 gives you the formula for a good hair dressing.

In hauling your calf to the show, do not make him 'car sick'. Avoid swinging and pitching him about the truck. He should have no green feed for at least three days before trucking as a prevention of scours.

At the show your calf should have a dry place to lie down and rest. Give him time to adjust to the changes. Be gentle with him for you are the only familiar part of his experience. By now the steps in your program should have given you the pleasing satisfaction of presenting a calf that 'shows well'.