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Dairy Cattle

Starter Guide.

Overview:

Preparing for and showing livestock can be an extremely rewarding and educational experience for youth. The lessons learned in showing and raising livestock are invaluable. However, it can feel very intimidating to begin. This guide is a broad overview of how to prepare for showing dairy cattle. All exhibitors are encouraged to ask questions as they grow through the program.

Manuals can be purchased at the SLV Extension Office

Record Books-

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/159S3N4U071Y8Ns-olQwPHzt6jSbJzTYU/view>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Q8nQYAHnuBpVLY-o18Ph6nNICFq4kARf/view>

How to prepare for purchasing your animal:

Before purchasing an animal and bringing it home, it is important to consider the needs of that animal. Firstly, do you have a well fenced area. It is recommended to have at least a 100x100 foot space for one to four steers or heifers. This will give ample room for them to exercise. It is also important to consider feeders and waterers. When considering a feeder, remember to make it a goal to eliminate waste and protect your cattle from consuming debris like rocks. For waterers, make sure whatever is used is big enough to hold the water the animal needs in a day and is heavy enough they cannot tip or easily break it.

Your dairy cattle will also need a wind or snow break or some sort of shelter for them to escape the snow, rain, wind, hail, and other weather that frequently impacts San Luis Valley. Cattle will not likely need heat lamps in the winters if they are able to stay dry and protected from the weather. In some instances, producers will move trailers into pens to give a break from wind and blowing snow/rain if they do not have other shelter options

Purchasing your animal:



Purchasing dairy cattle will depend on what you want to show. Calf, cow or heifer. Keep in mind when purchasing a dairy cow will have to have the time to milk that animal twice a day while it's in lactation. Breed might also take part in deciding what animal to purchase. For example: Jersey's produce less milk but have butterfat and protein making them ideal for cheese making. Holstein normally produce the most milk. These animals can be purchased through a dispersal sale, reduction sale or a consignment sale.



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Feeding your animal:

There are many feeds available for your dairy cattle. You can do your research to determine which you feel most confident about. You can ask your breeder and other livestock exhibitors for advice on what to feed. You will want to consider the breed of your animal when selecting a feed.

If you have purchased a calf, it's important to know that calf has an adequate amount of colostrum. (mother's first milk within the first 24 hours). After they receive colostrum, they need to receive milk or milk replacer. Offering calf start is also highly recommended. At weaning age (4-6 weeks) milk can be slowly replaced with more starter feed and roughage. A balanced ration of forage and concentrates will be needed for a cow in lactation depending on what period of lactation that animal is in at the time.



Halter Breaking:

Halter breaking is all about patience and practice. Go slow and don't rush the process. You never want to hit your animal. Your goal is to earn the animal's trust and respect. You're building a relationship with your animal and that takes time, plain and simple. Have a gentle, compassionate hand and be willing to devote time to the worthwhile effort of teaching your animal to respect the halter. One way to build this trust is to be regular in your interactions with the animal. Develop a routine and stick with it. Soon the animal will know what to expect from you and will learn to respond accordingly. Don't give up! No two animals are the same and some will be more stubborn than others. Be confident and consistent in your approach.



Teaching to Lead

It shouldn't take much more than a week to teach your show stock to lead. Always stand on the left side of your animal and use gentle pressure to teach your animal to respond by slightly pulling on the halter. Never yank. Once the animal is moving, release the pressure. Start small. Set attainable goals in terms of distance that you can meet and then increase. Don't expect your animal to be led long distances immediately. Allow them the time necessary to become comfortable with your command and guidance before expecting them to perform at show levels.



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Setting up in the show ring

To pose a calf or heifer, the front feet should be squarely aligned beneath the shoulders with the hind leg closest to the judge positioned slightly back. You don't want your animal to be too stretched out. Rather, your animal should be balanced. Once you're in the ring, you may need to reposition its feet as judges perform their inspections. Do it discreetly and gently.

Supplies for show preparation

- Hoof Trimming: One month before County Fair, you will want to get your animals hooves trimmed. This allows for an even walking surface and allows for more comfort
- Cattle Clippers, large & small clippers with multiple attachments. Small clippers with short attachments help you groom hard-to-reach places like inside ears
- Blade Lubricant, WD-40 works, but the manufacturer will likely have a product designed especially for your clippers
- Livestock Blower, A blow dryer will help the hair to stand up & make clipping easier and will generally help fluff the coat
- Extension Cord, you will need it to power the clippers & any necessary lights you might bring. It doesn't hurt to have a light for clipping to make sure your clipping area is as visible as possible. Make sure your cord is plenty long as you won't know how close you'll be to a power source before you get to the show



Common Health Concerns

- Bloat: Bloat is indigestion that shows in the form of excessive gas build up in the rumen. Managing bloat in a pasture setting is hard. You can make an effort to feed dry hay and avoid turning hungry cattle out on pasture so they don't graze too fast. Feedlot bloat can be prevented by making sure 10-15% of the ration fed contains roughage.
- Acidosis: Ruminal Acidosis occurs when the pH of the rumen falls below 5.5 (normal range is 6.5-7.0). In most cases this happens when cattle consume too much of a highly digestible carbohydrate such as barley. Treatment includes feeding long-stem dry hay, free-choice or force-fed baking soda (sodium bicarbonate), and rumen probiotics to repopulate the rumen with "good bugs."
- Ringworm: Ringworm is caused by many types of fungus. It causes circular lesions in the skin and hair loss. Prevent by sanitizing combs, halters and other items frequently and washing animals with Ring Out (or similar product) after shows. Treat with topical creams obtained from a veterinarian



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What will my Project Cost?

Livestock projects can really add up in cost. It is important to ensure that you can afford your project before buying animals. It also is important to consider what you are likely to make from your project to offset the cost. Below is a breakdown:

Cost of purchasing your animal: \$2,000-\$5,000

Cost of feed:

of Bags of Feed Needed= (Pounds of Gain Needed*Feed Conversion Ratio)/50 lbs
 (576 lbs*6 lbs)=3,456 lbs of feed 3456/50=69.12 (round up to 70 bags)

70 bags of feed* \$30.00(National Brand Show Ration)= \$1,960.00/head

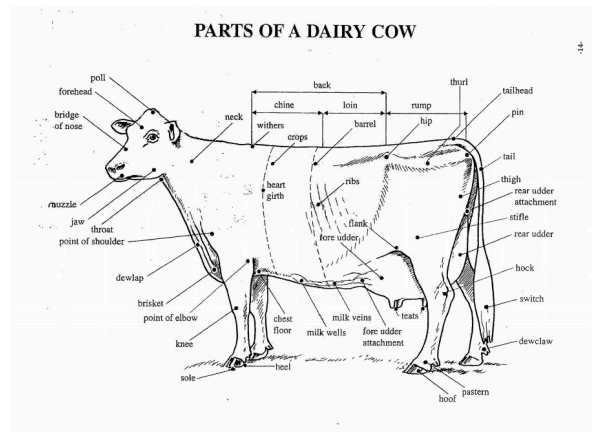
Cost of vet/health: \$300/head (estimation but should be budgeted into figure)

Supplies: \$300/head (Estimation but should be budgeted into figure)

Total Cost: \$4,560.00-7,560.00



Parts of Dairy Cattle



Sources and Resources

- <https://extensionpubs.osu.edu/dairy-resource-handbook/>

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