

DAIRY HUSBANDRY NO. 13-1974

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Fitting and Showing Dairy Cattle

The successful exhibitor begins fitting and training animals 2 months before the show. Separate your show animals from the rest of the herd (if they are on pasture or in a large dry lot). If your animal is carrying excess condition (coarse at the withers, patchy over the pinbones, throaty, or fat), place her on a low maintenance ration (no grain, limited amounts of hay, and plenty of water). Animals with excess conditioning will be placed lower in shows because they lack dairy character. If your animal is thin and in poor condition, feed 4 to 7 pounds extra grain daily. Some heifers will grow faster than others, so carefully observe her growth pattern. Your goal is to keep your animal growing and exhibiting dairy character without excess fat. Feed plenty of hay since this will appear to develop body capacity and body depth. Your grain mixture can be any homegrown grain (corn, oats, barley, etc.) plus minerals.

Daily brushing will encourage the hair to lie flat and appear smooth and sleek. Cover the animal with a thick blanket to loosen the hair and keep the animal clean. Clipping the entire body is not recommended (unless your animal has an extremely rough hair coat, stained areas, excess sun bleaching, or has not lost her winter hair coat). Normally, daily brushing will correct this problem. **DO NOT CLIP THE ENTIRE BODY IF YOUR SHOW IS LESS THAN 2 MONTHS AWAY.** This time is needed for regrowth. Clipping is not a substitute for elbow grease!

CLIPPING

You can clip your animal on the tail, legs, head, neck, and udder when you begin grooming your animal to gain some experience. You will want to re-clip these areas one week before the show. Get the animal accustomed to the clipper and its noise by beginning at the tail and working forward.

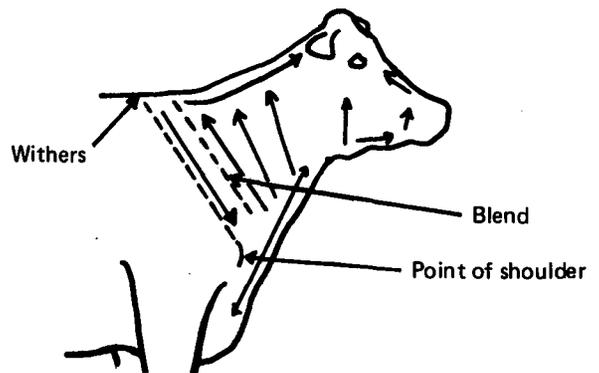
Tail: Clip the tail, leaving the switch long and large. Start at the top of the switch and clip up the tail against the grain of the hair to within 4-5 inches of the tailhead. Clip the tailhead with the grain of the hair (referred to as blending) being careful not to call attention to defects in the rump region. If there is a high area, clip closely. If a low point exists, leave the hair.

Legs: The side and back of the rear legs from the hock down should be clipped closely against the grain of the hair. Take ad-

vantage of natural lines and attempt to correct the legs by carefully removing hair. There is a blood vein in the hock region that makes an excellent point to blend. The back of the legs should be clipped in a straight line to the point of the pinbones.

Udder: Clip the entire udder on cows to bring out veining and show its quality. Do not clip the belly of calves or heifers since it makes the animals appear shallow bodied. Extremely long woolly hair can be removed by holding the clipper away from the body to clip the hair. The belly on cows should be clipped only enough to show milk veins to advantage.

Head and Neck: The head and neck should be clipped closely, clipping against the grain of the hair. Clip the area forward of a



line formed by the point of the shoulders and the front of the withers. The natural crease formed by the neck and shoulders can be used to blend the long hair. Care should be taken since animals are sensitive to the clipper around the head and may throw the head. Hair should be removed from inside the ear. If she will not allow the clipper, use a scissors to clip the long hair in the ear. Be careful with the scissors!

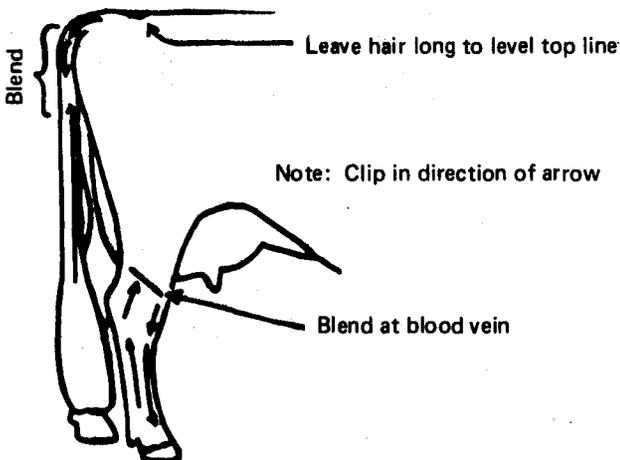
Lubricate your clipper as you are clipping by dipping the blades in a shallow widemouthed can of light oil or kerosene to remove dirt, dust, and minimize wear and dulling.

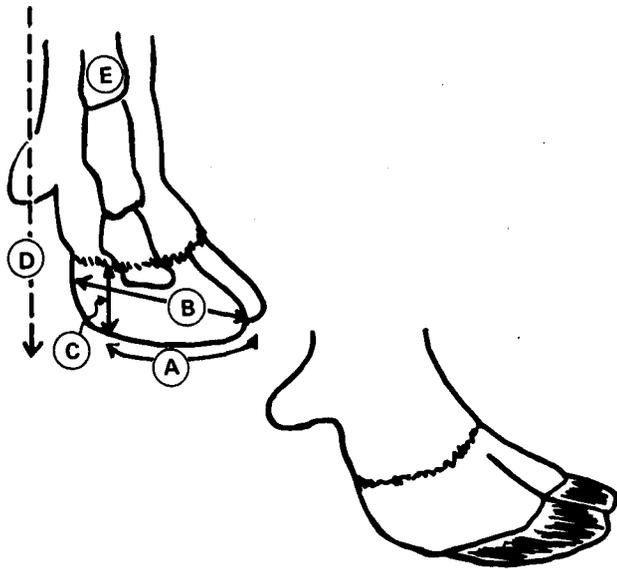
When a good job of clipping has been done, no lines are visible where blending has been done.

TRIMMING HOOVES

Your animal should walk correctly and comfortably. The normal foot of the cow or heifer should be well rounded (A), short toes (B), and deep at the heel (C). The proper leg formation puts the leg directly under the weight it is to support (D). Note the bone structure in the foot and see that the weight of the animal is carried by the strongest sections of the bone structure (E). See page 2.

The bottom figure represents a foot that needs attention. The dark area shows the amount of growth that needs to be removed. When the toes are too long, it causes the animal to carry too much weight in an unfavorable position. Too much weight





is on the heel and not enough on the toes. Long toes increase the chances of foot rot, punctures from the sole, and broken or cracked toes. Each of these leads to lameness in the animals.

If hooves are too long, shorten with a hoof trimmer, nipper, or a chisel and mallet. The bottom or sole of the foot should be trimmed so she stands squarely on her feet with the wall (outside shell) supporting her weight. A hoof knife (tool with a U-shaped tip) will remove excess growth and is safer than other tools. The foot can be smoothed with a rasp. Wear leather gloves to protect your hands. The following methods can be used to work on the feet: one foot can be raised at a time, use a chute or restraining table, or throw the animal. Work with care to avoid injury to you and your animal. Additional help is needed to restrain the animal; ask your parents or an adult dairy leader to help you.

WASHING

Your goal is to get your animal clean several weeks before the show. Use a mild soap (detergent can cause skin irritation) and scrub with a coarse brush. Avoid getting water in the ears and slowly accustom the animal to the water (avoid cold water and high pressure hoses). Remove all soap with a good rinse and extra water with a squeegee. Blanket the animal. Avoid washing more than once a week since it removes the animal's natural oils and coarsens the hair. Wash the stained areas and switch frequently until clean. Check the poll and head area since dirt accumulates there quickly. Excess oiling can make the animal warm and uncomfortable. If you use a light coat of oil, place it only on the dark hair because it may yellow the white hair. Remove wax and dirt from the inside of the ears with a clean cloth dampened with rubbing alcohol.

SHOWING AND LEADING

Practice makes perfect! You and your animal must work as a team, each knowing what is expected of the other. Get your animal used to the halter you will be using in the show. Train the animal to walk slowly one half step at a time in a clockwise direction. Always keep the animal between you and the judge. The lead strap should be on the left side of the animal loosely coiled in one hand (not wrapped around trapping your hand). The other hand should grasp the halter next to the head of your animal for control. You should be able to walk forward and backward with your animal under complete control and in view of the judge at all times. When you stop your animal, her feet should be positioned correctly.

Calves and Heifers: The front feet should be parallel or straight across from each other. The hind foot nearest the judge should be one half step **BACK**. Usually this is the right rear leg (your heifer appears longer and stretchy).

Cows: Again the front feet are parallel, but the hind foot nearest the judge is one half step **FORWARD** (this is normally the right hind leg). This allows the judge to see the rear and fore udder attachments.

All movements and positioning of the animal and her feet should be done with halter commands (not with your feet or body pushing). Allow 2-4 feet between you and the animal ahead of you when circling. When you are called in by the judge, line up closely to the animal next to you (less chance of the judge placing another animal above you). Never stop your animal with her front feet in a hole or going downhill since it makes her look smaller and less upstanding and powerful.

AT THE DAIRY SHOW

Finally, it is time to see the results of all your hard work. You should know the answers to the following questions:

1. What time does the show begin?
2. What breeds will be shown first and when will it be your turn?
3. Is your animal grade or purebred and what is the order?
4. Are all health, registration, and entry papers in order and checked in?
5. What is the birth date of your animal?
6. Who is her sire and dam?
7. When was your heifer bred and date due to calve (yearlings)?
8. When did your cow freshen; is she bred, and, if so, when will she calve again?
9. If she is an advanced cow, what is her age in years?
10. What is the production level of your cow?

The morning of the show, follow the same feeding, watering, bedding, and grooming routine established at home. Just before going into the ring, give her a final drink of water, but watch her sides (good spring of rib, but not rounded). If your animal dislikes the water, add a little molasses to cover up chlorine, mineral, and other tastes. You may do this at home to get your animal used to the molasses tasting water.

Be prompt and ready to go into the show ring with the correct animal. Watch the judge at all times and follow directions closely. Present your animal to best advantage, moving slowly, and keeping her between you and the judge. Once you are called in to line up, move smartly, but do not run. Don't cut in front of someone who is placed above you. Above all, exhibit good sportsmanship and a positive attitude. Be a modest winner and a gracious loser.

Good luck with your dairy project animal. You will make some mistakes and learn many more facts and tips on showing your animals as you gain experience in dairy cattle.

OTHER REFERENCES:

- 4-H Dairy Project Manual, pp. 6-8, Bulletin No. 9.
- Judging Dairy Cattle, Dairy Fact Sheet No. 2.

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