

Showing Market Beef 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 at how to prepare for showing market beef. All exhibitors are encouraged to ask questions as they grow through the program.



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. First, do you have an area with sturdy fencing? It is recommended to have at least a 100x100 foot space for one to four steers. This will give ample room for them to exercise. Having something solid to tie steers to is essential. 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. Be sure to offer at least 2 gallons of fresh water/100 pounds of body weight in the summer months. Use a tank that is heavy enough they cannot tip or easily break it.

Your market beef 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. Cattle will not likely need heat lamps in the winter 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:

The majority of market beef are born in the spring of the year before county fair and are purchased in the fall months. You can buy them slightly earlier or later than that but it is important to consider their weight when you buy them. A few things to consider for this are: average daily gain and the number of days you will have them on feed. The deadline for ownership is Feb 1st and 4HOnline identification deadline is May 1st. Weigh in is typically in Feb. The minimum weight for the Jeffco 4-H Fair is 1,000. Average Daily Gain (ADG) for beef is 2-3 lbs. Below is how to calculate the weight your animal needs to be at time of purchase:

Calculate # of days on feed:

Purchase date - weigh in date =
total days on feed

Oct 18 to Aug 1 = 288 days

Calculate pounds to be gained:

Total days on feed * ADG=
pounds to be gained

288 days*2.5 lbs ADG=720lbs

Find start weight:

Target weight- total pounds to be gained
= target starting weight

1,400 lbs - 720 lbs = 680 lbs



Photo by Integrity Stock Shots



Feeding your animal:

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

Maine, Chianina or, sometimes, Simmental influence

Protein: 11.5–12.5%

Fat: 3.5–4.5%

Fiber: 8–16%

British Breeds including Angus & Hereford

Protein: 12.5–13.5%

Fat: 3–4%

Fiber: 10–16%

Putting fat on an animal is harder in the summer months, so it's important to ensure adequate nutrition for growing is provided in the winter. To push fat development, feed a feed that is higher in fat percentage. It takes 4.5-7.5 pounds of feed to achieve one pound of gain. You should try to feed 2% of the animal's body weight daily. This means you will have to weigh your animal periodically to increase feed intake as your animal grows. You will also want to feed hay or alfalfa daily. Cattle rely heavily on forages, like hay, to get essential nutrients and to ensure a healthy rumen environment. Forages keep the pH of the rumen at a normal level. If fed too much grain with not enough forage, cattle will get acidotic and can bloat, potentially leading to death.



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.



Photo by Integrity Stock Shots



Setting up in the Show Ring

A show stick is a very useful tool when teaching your animal how to present itself. 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, consider getting 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. Be sure to use a blade lubricant to keep your clippers functioning properly.
- **Livestock Blower:** A blow dryer will help the hair to stand up & make clipping easier and will generally help fluff the coat.
- **Topline Brush:** This stiff brush will help the topline hair stand up for accurate clipping.
- **Hair Adhesive:** You'll want to get some advice in advance of show day about how to use this. Once you know, it will be useful for getting hair to stay in place once it's clipped and brushed. Be warned, it's very sticky and can make a mess if you don't use it with caution.
- **Scotch Comb:** You'll bring this into the showing to smooth any areas of hair when the judge feels your steer.



Common Health Concerns

- **Bloat:** Bloat is indigestion that shows in the form of excessive gas build up in the rumen, and is characterized by the appearance of swelling on the left side of the stomach. Feedlot bloat can be prevented by making sure 10-15% of the ration fed contains roughage and preventing abrupt changes in the diet.
- **Acidosis:** Ruminant 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 or other grains. 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.



Photo by Integrity Stock Shots



Approximate Project Expenses

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: \$1,000-\$5,000+

Cost of feed:

$$\# \text{ of Bags of Feed Needed} = (\text{Pounds of Gain Needed} \times \text{Feed Conversion Ratio}) / 50 \text{ lbs}$$
$$(680 \text{ lbs} \times 6 \text{ lbs}) = 4,080 \text{ lbs of feed} \quad 3456 / 50 = 81.6 \text{ (round up to 82 bags)}$$

$$82 \text{ bags of feed} \times \$30.00 \text{ (appx cost of 50 lb bag of feed)} = \underline{\$2,460.00/\text{head}}$$

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

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

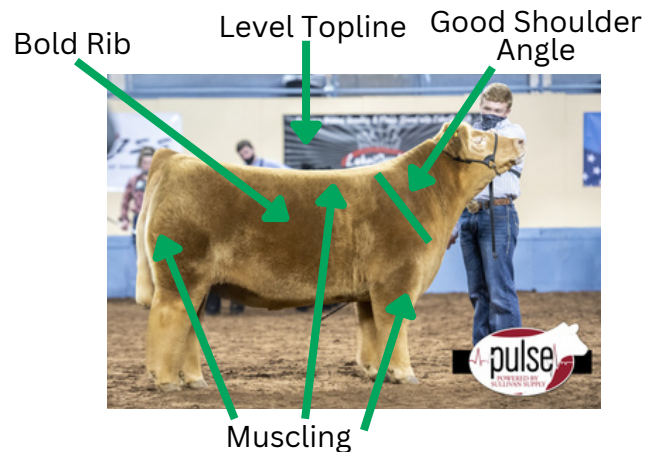
Total Cost: \$4,060.00-7,060.00

Approximate Jeffco 4-H Sale Price (Auction or Private Treaty): \$3,000-6,000



Selecting Market Cattle

You want your beef to be wide constructed with good muscling behind their shoulders, down their spine, and through their leg and forearm. Good cattle will also be able to move unrestricted and have a 45 degree angle at their shoulder. You also want them to ‘balance’ well. This means that the front 1/3 matches the middle and end 1/3's. Basically, all the pieces fit together.



Sources and Resources

- <https://agmr.osu.edu/sites/agmr/files/imce/pdfs/Beef/FeedingShowSteer.pdf>
- <https://www.qcsupply.com/blog/product-tips-and-how-tos/beginners-guide-for-showing-cattle.html>
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- <https://www.purinamills.com/show-feed/education/detail/show-cattle-feed-top-tips-from-the-experts>

Adapted from Phillips County (Jessie Salyards, 4-H Specialist)

