

Training a Heifer for Show

In order to have a heifer that can be shown to its best advantage on show day, schedule your work plan months in advance. Considerations include the initial selection, breaking her to lead and proper feeding.

Selection

Selection of the heifer is an important step. The heifer should be stylish, well grown but dairy, straight over the topline, and have good feet and legs. If you are unsure of your ability to select animals with good conformation, ask a person with experience to help, such as an extension agent, 4-H leader or dairy producer in your area with experience.

When selecting a heifer, know what the various age requirements for different classes are. Generally, older heifers have an advantage over younger heifers within a class. Another consideration should be the size of the heifer relative to the size of the person who will be showing it. A young exhibitor with little experience will be best off showing a young calf rather than a yearling. Disposition of the heifer might also be considered when selecting for these young exhibitors.

Finally, if there are a number of heifers in the calf pen at home, it usually makes more economic sense to make your selection there rather than going out to purchase a heifer.

Good A.I. sire selection and a sound calf rearing program should ensure that there is an adequate number of good calves to select from.

Make sure that the heifer has had all the proper vaccinations. A suggested program would be to vaccinate for Brucella, IBR, BVD, PI₃, BRSV and a 5-way Lepto at 4 months of age. An 8-way Clostridium and wart vaccine can be given one week later. One to two months later, the booster injections for IBR, BVD, PI₃, BRSV and Lepto need to be given. After one week, give the Clostridium and wart vaccine boosters.

It is a good idea to observe the feet on the heifer when she is selected to determine how much hoof trimming she might need. Most heifers should have their feet trimmed at least once before the show. An expert trimmer can do a lot to correct poor feet and improve the heifer's stance.

Halter Breaking

The amount of time required to train a heifer to lead will depend on her disposition and the techniques used. Starting at least six weeks prior to the show, the first step is to halter break your heifer. Put a halter on her and tie her in her pen so she learns to respect the halter. It is best to use a stable halter that doesn't tighten up under the heifer's jaw (*Figure 1*).

If the heifer fights the halter, a rope halter will put undue pressure on the heifer's jaw causing it to become swollen and very sore. This can interfere with trying to teach her to lead later. Do not tie her with a show halter. Try to calm the heifer during this time by talking to her and petting her on the side of the neck and shoulder. Do not pet a heifer on the poll or forehead if you are trying to tame her as this is looked at by her as an act of aggression and will agitate her.



Figure 1

Leaving the animal tied a couple of times for 1-2 hours is generally enough to halter break a heifer. If you leave the heifer tied for longer periods of time, make sure she has access to feed and water and has a well bedded place to lie down. The place and manner that the heifer is tied should be such to minimize any chance of injury.

Training to Lead

When training heifers to lead, most people prefer to use a rope halter. The halter goes on so that the part that tightens up is under the jaw with the lead rope on the left (*Figure 2*). Adjust the halter so that the nose band is low on the heifer's nose. This gives more control than if it is riding high on the face. The first time a heifer is led out of the pen, an experienced person large enough to control the heifer should be at the halter. Younger showpersons will have plenty of time to gain experience later.

To get the heifer to walk, walk at her side. If necessary, have someone walk behind her to give her a nudge or tail twist if needed rather than tugging at the halter (*Figure 3*). Give her

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a little slack in the lead rope and try to walk at the heifer's pace the first time out. You'll have time to slow her down in later sessions. Try to keep it a pleasant experience. If the heifer stops, spend a few seconds talking to her and petting her before resuming the walk. After 15-20 minutes, put the heifer back in the pen. Training periods of longer than 20 minutes can be counter productive, especially if you or the heifer begin to lose patience.



Figure 4

Rarely should it be necessary, nor is it productive, to discipline a heifer by striking her. Generally, hitting a heifer only worsens her mood and confuses her. On rare occasions, traditional methods of training may not work and you might opt to expedite the process by tying the heifer behind a wagon hooked to a tractor. This method works but has a potential for abuse. Use a strong halter and drive slowly. Take every precaution to prevent injury to the heifer. Have someone walk behind the heifer to nudge her along, making sure that the heifer is walking and not sliding her feet. If you are patient, the heifer should learn quickly that it is best to trail along rather than fight the halter.

There are a couple of other techniques that people have used to train heifers in a short time. One is to tie them with a stable halter by themselves in a pen without feed or water. After twelve hours, set a bucket of water about three feet away and behind the heifer. Untie her and turn her to the bucket and let her drink. Put some feed back at the tie point, turn her back and tie her for another twelve hours. Twelve hours later, repeat the routine with the water 6 to 10 feet away. Repeat the routine with the water further away. The heifer will associate you and being lead with a positive experience in a couple of days.

Another technique is to tie a heifer's halter to a donkey's with about two feet between them and put them out to pasture. When the heifer gets jumpy, the donkey will stay still until the heifer settles down. In 2 to 3 days the heifer will be broke to lead.

After a heifer is responding well to the halter, switch to a show halter in your practices. Teach her to walk slowly and to place her legs correctly when stopped in preparation for showday (*Figure 5*). Practice backing up with pressure just at the halter. Let her get used to having other people around as she is being led.



Figure 3

As much as possible, try to use positive rather than negative reinforcement. Patience, kindness and firmness, along with a little cow psychology, will most quickly train heifers.

Don't drag a heifer as it is being done in *Figure 4*. Heifers won't cooperate if they associate being lead as a bad experience.

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Figure 5

Feeding

Feeding programs for show heifers shouldn't be much different than the regular heifer ration on a farm. Make use of growth charts (*Figure 6*) to make sure heifers are growing at the proper rate. If heifers are over conditioned, take off the condition by reducing the energy in the diet well before the fair. This is usually done by reducing the grain or excluding ionophores (rumensin or bovatec) from the diet. If grain is reduced, make sure the heifer is still getting an adequate supply of protein in the diet by top dressing a protein supplement. You want her to lose condition without arresting her growth rate.

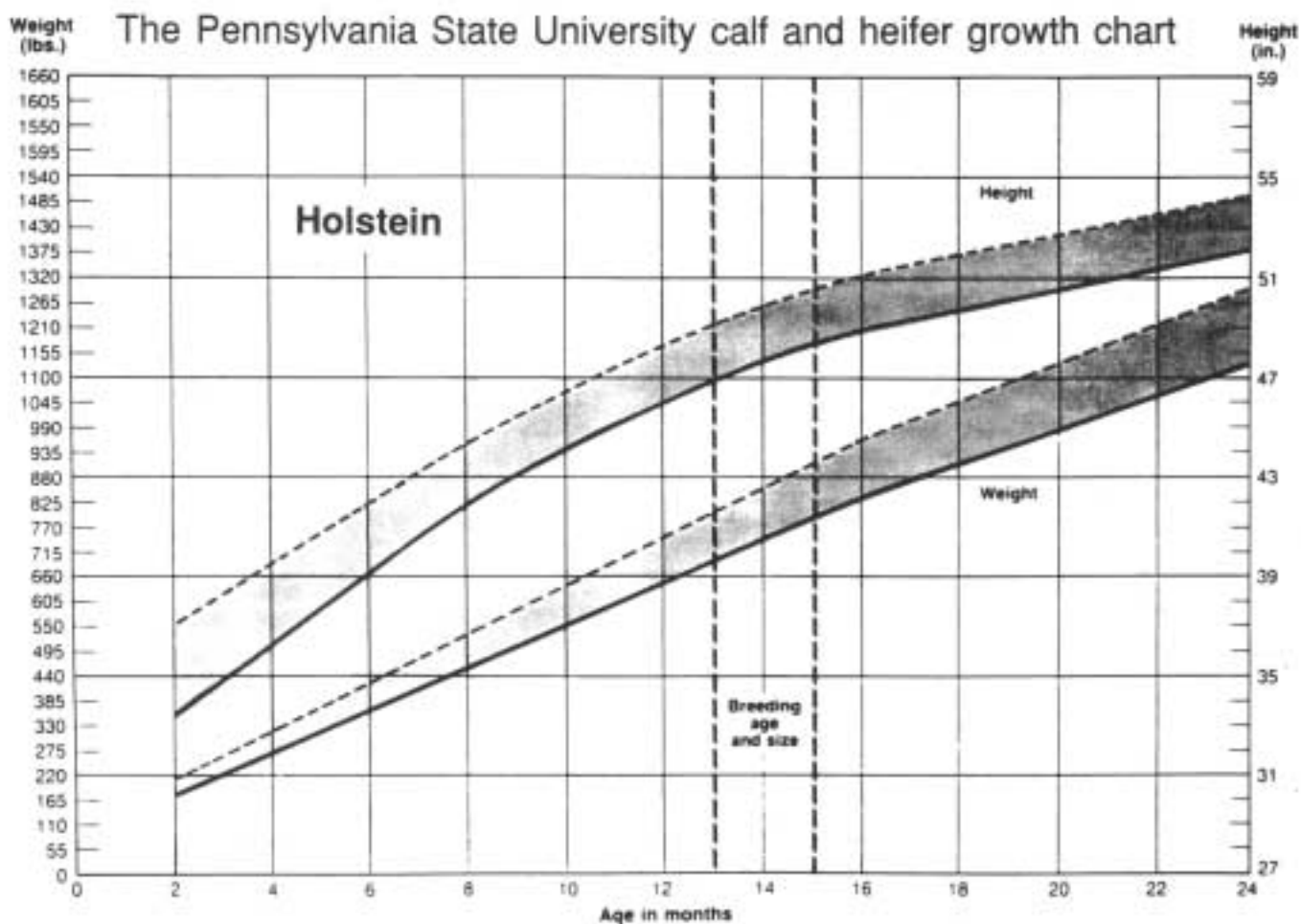


Figure 6

Clipping and Grooming for Show

Summer finds many dairy people working with a heifer or cow in anticipation of bringing home a blue ribbon. Good clipping and grooming will enhance those chances by making a short heifer appear longer, a thick heifer sharper, or a plain heifer more stylish. Becoming an expert fitter takes years of practice, patience, observations of others techniques, and some artistic ability.

The showbox of an experienced showperson is as well-equipped as a modern beauty salon (*Figure 1*). Equipment and supplies include stiff and soft bristled brushes, tail comb, rattling brush, soap, fly spray, hair spray, alcohol, spray bottle, talcum powder, hair oil, halters and hair clippers.



Figure 1

3 Weeks Prior to Show Day

Generally, clipping starts about 2-3 weeks prior to showday for heifers with a body clip (Cows usually are not body clipped unless their hair is excessively long or coarse.). A body clip entails clipping all of the hair that won't be clipped close right before the show except for the topline as illustrated in *Figure 2*. Clip against the lay of the hair. Don't clip the hair off the top of the topline. On most heifers, you will want to clip the underline at this time. On shallow bodied heifers, clip the underline about a month earlier so that you get additional hair growth prior to the show which will give her more depth. After the body is clipped, work the topline somewhat as you would before the show. Brush the hair up and clip it so that it comes to a point over the topline (*Figure 3*).

An alternative to this early body clipping is to purchase a plucking blade for your clipper. Because this blade is thicker, it leaves the hair about 1/2 inch long allowing you to body clip a heifer right prior to show. A regular blade is still used on the rest of the animal. Plucking blades are more expensive than regular blades.

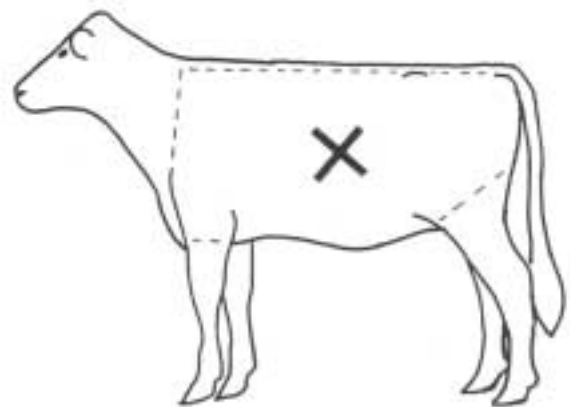


Figure 2



Figure 3

Within a Few Days of Show Day

Clip the entire head except for the eyebrows, eyelashes and hair on the muzzle. Clip against the hair, getting as close as possible. Clip the inside and outside of the ears. If the heifer has a metal ear tag be careful to avoid it with the clippers as nicking it can easily break the clipper blades. Animals are generally sensitive to being clipped on the head region. Be assertive, firm and patient. Try not to become agitated. A stanchion and nose lead may facilitate getting the hair clipped.

Clip the neck from the head to an imaginary line that runs from the point of the shoulders to the top of the shoulder blades (*Figure 4*). Do not clip past the shoulder blades. Leave the hair on top of the withers and neck near the withers. This will be clipped as the topline is worked. Clip the brisket. The front legs can be clipped from the toe up to the

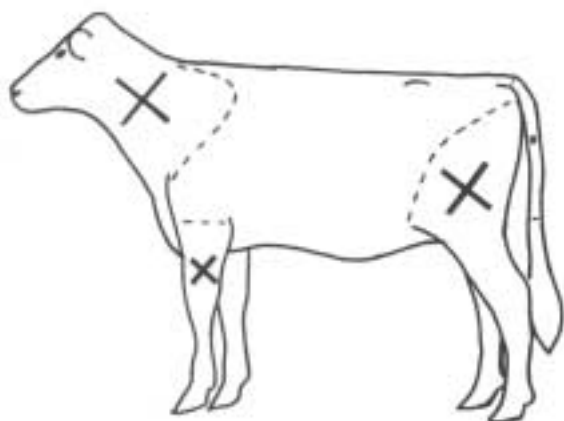


Figure 4

point of the elbow. This is especially useful to eliminate the stained hair on the knees and near the feet.

Clip the hind legs on the inside and out, from the toe up to the middle of the thigh. As you clip or work with animals, stay close and in contact with them to lessen your chances of being kicked. *Figure 5* shows the correct position when clipping the hind leg. In *Figure 6* the person is not in contact with the heifer and in a good position to be kicked.



Figure 6



Figure 5

Begin clipping the tail about one good hand width above where the switch starts. Clip against the hair (*Figure 7*). Blend as the tail goes between the pins. Clip any long hair off the vulva. If you are showing a cow, the entire udder and milk wells should be fine clipped to show off the mammary veining.

You are trying to accomplish two objectives as you clip the topline. Make the heifers topline appear level as viewed from the side and sharp, especially over the withers, as viewed from behind. First get the hair to stand up by brushing against the hair and applying a hair spray or a dry



Figure 7



Figure 8

antiperspirant containing aluminum chlorhydrate (*Figure 8*). Clean hair will stand up easier than dirty, oily hair. You may wish to wash the topline before you proceed.

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There are different techniques used for clipping the topline. *Figure 9* illustrates clipping against the hair with one finger under the blade to prevent clipping too closely. Some prefer clipping with the lay of the hair. Some clip with the clipper turned over, resting the top of the clipper on the heifer to prevent nicks as in *Figure 10*. Whatever technique you choose, go slowly. Clip a little on one side and then the other. Get the hair brushed up. Continue the procedure until you've achieved the desired effects. A common error is clipping too close on high spots over the rump. This draws attention to the defect rather than concealing it. The goal is to make your heifer look as perfect as possible but still natural! *Figures 11 and 12* show the same heifer before and after clipping.

Showday

Wash your heifer in time so that she will be dry well before you are scheduled to take her into the ring. Soap and rinse your heifer twice. Be careful not to get any water into the ear. This may cause the ear to droop and heifer to hold her head to the side as you are showing her. Use a soft, damp rag to clean wax and dirt out of her ears. Clean the dew claws with a stiff bristled brush. Clean the hooves with a wire brush.

After leaving the wash rack, brush the hair down with a soft-bristled brush. When dry, brush the hair up on the topline. Have someone else hold a blow dryer as you brush and apply the hair spray. After the hair is up, you may wish to take the clippers for one last trim, making the topline as neat and sharp as possible.

Fluff up the switch with a brush and hold with hair spray. Apply talcum powder to any stained or scuffed areas such as the knees. A light coat dressing can be applied to add a sheen to the hair. Just a little will do it. The wet look is out! One technique used is to mix one-half to two-thirds oil (such as mineral) with rubbing alcohol in a spray bottle. Lightly mist this mixture on the animal's coat. Apply fly spray to the legs, if needed, and you're ready to enter the show ring.

Exhibiting an animal can provide a welcome relief from the routine work on a dairy. A proper job of clipping and grooming can enhance chances of a blue ribbon and provide a great deal of enjoyment and satisfaction.



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 9



Figure 12

In the Show Ring

Showmanship involves showing your animal to make her look her best at all times. Once the grooming is done, your techniques and demeanor in the show ring can often influence your final placing and give you a great deal of self-satisfaction.

Your appearance is part of showmanship. You want to look sharp, clean and alert. Clean, neat clothes are a must. Most exhibitors wear white clothing and this is preferred. White trousers with a dark, solid colored shirt has gained acceptance at some shows. Many judges prefer a heavier leather shoe or boot rather than a tennis shoe. Your hair should be well groomed and wear a smile!

Try to be at ringside a few minutes before your class is to begin. If you are there longer than that, your heifer may get tired and impatient before the class begins. It probably doesn't matter whether you are the first or the last one in the ring, but be on time!

Hold the heifer with your hand right in the halter for maximum control (*Figure 1*). Use whatever method is efficient and comfortable but also allows easy release of the halter if need be. Fold the lead strap in 10 inch loops and hold it in a convenient manner with either your right or left hand. Do not roll the lead strap in a coil, wrap it around your hand or throw it over your shoulder.



Figure 1

Enter the ring in a clockwise direction. Walk backward when the judge is observing your heifer, otherwise walk forward. Walk at a pace to fit the situation, keeping a suitable distance between you and the animal in front of you. In the ring, if the exhibitor in front of you is having difficulty moving the animal, help by nudging the animal or gently twisting the tail.

If your animal is roach backed you may wish to pinch down the topline (*Figure 2*). If she's weak over the top, poke her in the ribs to bring the top up. If the animal has excess skin in the throat, pull up on the throat with your free hand as you're leading her around the ring to make her look more clean cut and feminine (*Figure 3*).



Figure 2



Figure 3

Working with Heifers

When the judge asks you to stop, set the animal up. The legs should be squarely under the animal, with the heifer's hind leg nearest the judge back several inches. This will give the appearance of your heifer being longer. The head should be held high to make the animal look taller and more alert but not too high to make it look unnatural. In *Figure 4* the heifer is set up correctly. The same heifer in *Figure 5* is set up with her legs set too wide and head held too low. As the judge moves around to the opposite side of the heifer, move up one step to reposition the hind legs. Once a cow has freshened, the proper position of the hind legs is reversed with the leg nearest the judge forward. This allows the judge to see the fore and rear udders at the same time.



Figure 4



Figure 5

If the animal won't set up perfectly, settle for good enough. If you are constantly fussing and maneuvering, you will frustrate the animal. Never step on or handle the animal's hind feet to get them in position. Only place the front feet with the aid of your feet if the judge isn't looking. It is best to be able to set your animal up just by pressure applied at the halter. Practice prior to the show will usually allow you to accomplish this.

Be prepared to answer questions that the judge might ask relative to your animal. These include birth date and if or when she might have been bred. Know a cow's freshening and due date. In an advanced showmanship class, judges may ask questions about the sire, dam, service sire, production levels, rations, parts of the cow and other subjects to test your dairy husbandry knowledge.

Be alert. Continue to glance back and forth between your animal and the judge. Don't stare at the judge. Be aware of the signals asking you to move or stop. Don't make the judge ask you to do something twice.

Don't over show! The ideal is to show your animal to its best advantage as effortlessly as possible so as not to draw attention to yourself. Over showing, as illustrated in *Figure 6*, will tire you and the animal and is distracting to the judge.



Figure 6

When the judge motions you into line, walk quickly into position. Switch hands on the halter and walk forward (*Figure 7*). Position your animal close enough to the one next to you so that there isn't room to position another animal above you. Make sure your animal is in line with the others. Don't let yourself or your animal fall asleep while you are in line. Keep the animal's legs positioned correctly. If the judge walks by to the opposite side, remember to reposition the legs.

Working with Heifers



Figure 7

If the judge asks you to back your heifer out of line, back her by pushing back on the halter or push your right hand into the heifer's shoulder (*Figure 8*). If she won't back, lead her forward, turn and travel back through the line or around the end if you are near the end of the line. Regarding turning a heifer, it is usually recommended to turn right with the heifer because she will be less likely to step on your toes. At times, it is much more expedient to do a left turn and this is permissible. Keep your feet away from the heifer's hooves as you bring her around.



Figure 8

Keep showing your animal while the reasons are being given and as you lead from the ring. Listen to the judges reasons for his placings and try to learn from them. They may help you in another year as you select your animal.

Sportsmanship and helping others is a big part of show ring etiquette. If you notice other exhibitors that need pointers in clipping or showing, privately offer your assistance. It can be extremely rewarding to see someone come back another year and do better because of assistance you've given.

There are bound to be disappointments and disagreements with some of the placings. Judging is not an exact science and two totally competent judges may place a class quite differently. As with most of life, there is a bit of luck involved. Be a humble winner as well as a gracious loser. Be ready to congratulate the winners and give encouragement to those that were further down the line.

Below is a showmanship scorecard developed by the Purebred Dairy Cattle Association:

	<u>Points</u>
Appearance of Animal.....	30
Cleanliness	10
Grooming	10
Clipping.....	5
Condition and Thriftiness	5
Appearance of Exhibitor.....	10
Showing Animal in the Ring.....	60
Leading	25
Posing.....	15
Show Animal to Best Advantage	10
Poise, Alertness, Attitude	10
	100

Cattle Restraint

The method of restraint to use in controlling an animal depends upon the task that needs to be performed and manpower and equipment available. Whatever the method, the animal's safety and welfare needs to be kept in mind.

Restraining Calves

Before any animal can be restrained it needs to be caught. With calves, and with older animals, the easiest way to control them is by gaining control of the head. The head can be turned back against the body or controlled by grasping the lower jaw (*Figure 1*).



Figure 1

Many times a halter is needed to control animals during castration, dehorning, vaccination, etc. A very efficient haltering technique is illustrated in *Figure 2*. First tie a loop in the end of the rope, using a bowline knot. The size of the loop depends upon the size of the animal. Place the loop over the animal's ears and down around the face. Next, form an adjustable loop by pulling rope under the fixed loop. Position this loop under the animal's jaw. This halter will give good control of the animal without any danger of choking.



Figure 2



Figure 3

Another type of temporary halter is illustrated in *Figure 3*. A lariat loop or a loose loop made with a bowline knot is placed around the animal's neck. Run the lead rope from the back through the loop under the neck. This will form a loop that goes over the heifer's nose.

Calves up to 300 pounds can be laid on their side by flanking. This method of restraint works well for treating the navel with iodine or removing extra teats. After the calf is caught, grasp the flank with one hand, turn the head around toward the body with the other and put your leg, bent at the knee, under the animal (*Figure 4*). Lift and pull the animal toward you so that you transfer its weight off of its feet onto your leg. Now slide the calf off your leg to the ground. Young calves can be held down by placing one knee on the calf's neck and one on the calf's side, leaving your hands free.



Figure 4

Working with Heifers

Older calves or heifers from which you are removing extra teats usually require two people to restrain it. One person puts a knee on the calf's neck and curls the front leg back. The second person puts a foot right above the hock on the bottom leg and grasps the top leg near the pastern, pulling it up and back (Figure 5).



Figure 5

Another method of laying a calf down is with the use of a halter. The head is pulled around as the lead rope goes around the thigh and inside the hind leg. By pulling on the rope the hind leg is brought forward (Figure 6). By pulling on the rope and lifting under the neck, the calf can be slid down your leg as before. The rope can be further used to restrain the leg once the calf is down (Figure 7).



Figure 6

Head gates or ways to immobilize the head make operations such as dehorning a lot easier but often are not available when calves are in hutches. Figures 8 and 9 illustrate a portable stall that was made relatively cheaply. The stall folds up after use.



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

Casting an Animal

An animal can be cast when near total immobilization is required. First, halter the animal and tie her to a secure object using a quick release knot. Next, tie the end of a 35 ft. rope loosely around the animal's neck using a bowline knot. Put a half-hitch just in back of the shoulders and another one over the loin and under the flanks (*Figure 10*). Cast the animal by pulling on the rope from directly behind. The tightening rope exerts pressure on the nerves and blood vessels supplying the legs, causing the animal to lie down (*Figure 11*). A constant steady pull needs to be maintained on the end of the rope while the management technique is being performed.

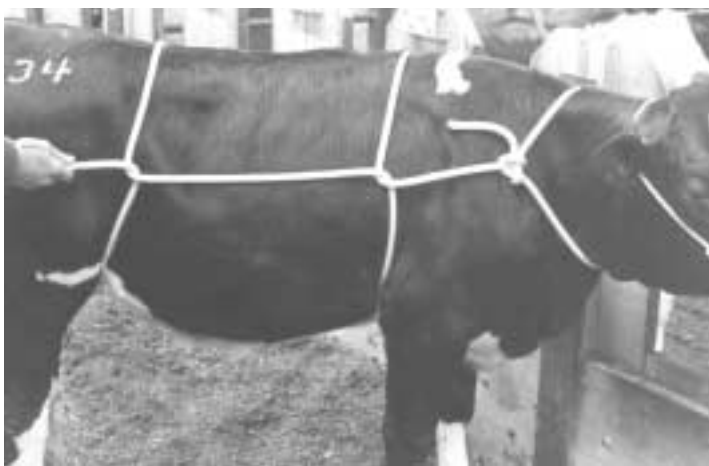


Figure 10



Figure 11

Animals should be cast only on well-bedded or grassy areas to prevent unnecessary bruising or injury. Avoid casting animals that are heavy with calf. Also, don't keep an animal lying on its side for extended periods, as bloat or pneumonia may result.

Raising the Feet

There are numerous methods for manually raising feet. None of them are especially easy or enjoyable. A smaller heifer or gentle cow may allow a person with a strong back to raise a foot manually and rest her leg on your knee or thigh. Pushing the animal's weight onto the other leg will make raising the foot easier. Using a nose lead or rope tightened around the flank may reduce struggling by diverting the animal's attention.

When using ropes, the animal should always be adequately restrained to prevent injury. The front foot can be held up by attaching a rope around the pasterns and bringing it up over the back (*Figure 12*).



Figure 12

The rear leg can be hoisted up by placing a rope just above the hock and having the rope attached over a beam. A slightly different method is to place a loop above the pasterns, pass the rope over a beam, and then back around the leg right above the hock (*Figure 13*). Don't raise the leg any further than necessary and have the cow properly restrained to avoid unnecessary risk of injury.



Figure 13

Nose Lead

A nose lead can give added restraint when needed such as for intervaneous injections and clipping the head of an unruly animal. The nose lead can be rather severe and should only be used when needed and then used properly.

To put a nose lead in, stand at the side of the animal's head. Grasp the animal by the lip on the side of the mouth and pull its head toward you (*Figure 14*). Insert the nose lead one nostril at a time and squeeze it shut. Have a firm hold of the nose lead as you release the animal's head. The animal will usually attempt to swing its head from side to side in an attempt to shake off the nose lead. The rope from the nose lead should be held or double wrapped around a pipe or post and held rather than tied. Tying the rope could cause the animal to tear its nose, should the animal go down.



Figure 14

Headgates and Squeeze Chutes

A head gate, squeeze chute and cattle handling facilities can make handling livestock much less stressful and efficient. This generally translates into management techniques being done in a more timely fashion and sick animals being treated more promptly.

There are different types of headgates on the market. Choose one that fits your cattle and the tasks that you will be performing in it. A headgate with straight vertical neck bars has much less chance of choking an animal but doesn't provide head control like curved bar stanchion headgates will. This disadvantage of straight bars can be overcome by quickly and simply slipping a halter on the animal once it is in the headgate.

Proper design of a squeeze chute includes a tailgate, removable side panels on the bottom 24 inches of the chute and removable bars above the side panels for easy access to the animal. It is desirable to have a chute with adjustable bottom widths so that when the animal is squeezed the bottom is

narrower than the top to prevent the animal from laying down. Workable inside widths at the floor are 6 inches for 500 lb. animals, 8 inches for 700 lb. animals and 12 inches for larger animals.

Occasionally, cattle in a stall or headgate refuse to get up from a lying position. *Figure 15* illustrates a method of encouraging animals to rise without causing undue excitement or injury. Simply cup your hand over the animal's nostrils. As the animal becomes short of breath, it will inevitably rise before there is any danger of suffocation. Sometimes one may be smart enough to breathe through its mouth. This is solved by holding the mouth closed with your other hand.



Figure 15

Tilt Tables

Tilt tables have generally been preferred over any other method of restraint for hoof trimming or inspection of the foot. The general procedure is to strap the animal to the table and slowly tilt the animal over. Allow the animal to settle down just a bit before tying down its legs.

Hoof-Trimming Chutes

Hoof-trimming chutes in which animals remain upright with belts under them for support have been greatly improved in past years and are becoming the chute of choice. When using older or homemade models for unruly animals, a few precautions should be taken. To prevent them from sticking their legs where they don't belong, the feet should be hobbled to the bottom of the chute except when they are being worked on. Provisions can be made so that rope can be used to raise and hold the feet as explained earlier.

Working with First-Calf Heifers

Dairymen work closely with cattle on a daily basis, and have a lot of control in determining whether this association is a pleasant one or one that causes discomfort for both. Cows are generally docile, and respond best to gentle handling and a soothing voice. Sometimes additional restraints are needed to perform a task, but the importance of calmness, gentleness and confidence on your part can't be overemphasized.

In most situations it is advantageous for the heifers to become accustomed to the milking routine and housing prior to calving. In a milking parlor situation, the heifers can be housed with the milking herd and walked through the parlor a few times prior to being taken to the maternity area. In stall barns, heifers should have a chance to get used to getting up and down in the stalls at least two weeks prior to calving.

After freshening make sure that heifers are provided plenty of clean bedding. This will help prevent slipping and bruising of legs or teats.

Some heifers may not let down their milk at the first milking. If they are wild or extremely nervous, 1 cc of Heifer Calm (rompen and oxytocin) will tame them and cause them to let down their milk. Oxytocin by itself can be used if the heifer isn't wild. Doses are decreased the next milking and by the third day the animals are milked normally. An older remedy is to stimulate the lining of the vulva with your forearm. This causes a cow to secrete her own oxytocin into the blood stream.

Heifers may need to be restrained when they first enter the milking string, to prevent them from kicking off the milking unit or kicking the milker. If the milker is gentle and calm, heifers generally return the favor. Usually, laying a hand on the rump is enough to calm a heifer. However, a few may need additional restraints, such as use of a Kow-Kant-Kick, rope or tailhold. When applying a tailhold, push up more than forward and use only as much force as needed (*Figure 1*). The Kow-Kant-Kick is applied in front of the hooks and tightened (*Figure 2*). This exerts pressure in the stifle area, discouraging any kicking.

Another restraint that acts in the same fashion is illustrated in *Figure 3*. Place a rope over the front of the hooks and around the front of the udder. Tighten the rope snugly and tie with a quick-release knot. Remove the restraint after milking is completed and the cow has been teat dipped. Don't use restraints unless needed, and then only as long as necessary.

A simple technique to restrict a two-year old's movement in a tie-stall is to tie her head to the side using a rope halter. Put

the halter on the heifer from behind as you are standing at the side of the heifer. The heifer will usually move forward in the stall and you should be able to tie her head to the side with little resistance. Tie her head to the right for right side milking and to the left for left side milking. This will naturally cause the heifer to stand to the other side of the stall in the proper position for milking.



Figure 1



Figure 2

You may wish to hobble a heifer or cow occasionally. This will prevent kicking, and also prevent a cow from injuring herself by sprawling on a slippery floor. To hobble a heifer,

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Figure 3

first take two short pieces of rope and tie the first length above the dewclaws (*Figure 4*). In the same fashion, tie the other rope on the opposite leg and then join the ropes in the middle with a tight knot (*Figure 5*). Cut off long loose ends with a knife.

If the hobbles are tied to allow about 15-18 inches between the legs, they won't interfere with the heifer getting up and down or walking, and can be left on for an extended period, if necessary. A soft cotton rope will be least abrasion on the animal's legs. Remove the hobbles promptly if the legs become sore where the hobbles are attached. Cow hobbles can also be purchased for about \$20.00. The nylon hobbles are easier to apply than rope and are an excellent investment to use as a prevention aid to keep weak cows from doing the splits or over extending her rear legs which can cause serious damage.



Figure 4



Figure 5

Handling Bulls

Even with the many advantages of A.I., many dairies still keep a herd bull for cleanup or for breeding heifers. Clearly, the biggest disadvantage of keeping bulls is the danger they pose to the dairy's workers and visitors. Many people have been injured by a "friendly" or "tame" bull. Never underestimate a bull's strength, and respect the possibility of sudden disposition changes. A dairy bull should not be kept beyond 2 to 2 1/2 years of age and sold prior to that if he shows aggressive behavior. A research study found that bull calves raised in groups were less likely to attack people than bull calves raised in individual pens. The theory is that if bulls are raised with other cattle, they are less likely to think of people as part of the herd and less likely to feel the need to express dominance over a human.

Prospective herd sires should be halter-broke at a young age. Before a year of age, a bull ring should be placed in the nose of the bull. *Figure 1* shows two sizes of self-piercing bull rings. The smaller ring works well on young calves under 6 months of age. Don't put a large ring in young calves, because it may interfere with eating. When the calf outgrows the small ring, remove it and place a larger ring in the nose.



Figure 1

The procedure for putting in a ring is relatively simple. Properly restrain the calf's head in a head gate and halter. Clean and rinse the ring in an antiseptic solution. Locate the ring in the soft tissue 1/2 inch back from the nostrils (*Figure 2*), just in front of the cartilage of the nasal septum. You can easily feel the cartilage with your fingers. Piercing this may cause necrosis of tissue. Use a smooth, steady push to force the ring through the tissue (*Figure 3*). Wearing leather gloves will give you a better grip on the ring and may prevent a gash on your hand from the ring's sharp edges. When ringing a bull for the first time, it may

be easier to first pierce the nose with a trochar and canula (such as is used for bloat) or use a sharpened punch. The ring can then be pushed through the preformed hole.

Once the ring is passed through the nose, close the ring and replace the locking screw. It is a good idea to have someone hold a pail or scoop under the ring in case the screw is dropped. Or at least sweep the ground over which you are working prior to beginning the procedure. Trying to find a small screw dropped in a pile of silage is not a fun task.

With a file, take any rough edges off the joint or screw head to avoid any additional tears to the nose. It usually takes about 2 weeks to completely heal the wound, so don't use the nose ring before this time.

Observe the bull to make sure he continues to eat and that there are no complications after being rung. Remove any items from the pen that could catch the ring, such as projecting bolts or spikes.



Figure 2



Figure 3

Bulls

Work with bulls at a young age if they are to be trained to lead. It is important to keep the bull's head up, and don't step in front of him. **Never** turn your back on a bull, and don't handle or lead mature bulls without assistance. One method of leading a bull is with a heavy rope halter and a rope on the nose ring, with a person on each side to protect each other. Better yet, *Figure 4* shows the use of a staff hooked to the ring, which gives greater control of the head with a heavy rope to the other side. If the bull is extremely difficult to handle, people have used baling wire or a transcom chain through the nose to help lead bulls in the show ring. Remove the wire or chain after the bull is done being shown.



Figure 4

Never tie a bull with just a rope on the bull ring. If he becomes frightened, he may break the ring or tear it out of his nose. To properly tie the bull for short periods of time, tie the rope halter to one side of a stall and the rope on the nose ring to the other side with a little more slack (*Figure 5*). Be sure to tie the ropes low enough so the bull can comfortably lie down and stand up. If a bull does tear out his ring in which case the front of the nose is tore out, the ring can be replaced vertically instead of horizontally.



Figure 5

If bulls are kept for many years, such as in AI studs, and eat off the concrete, the concrete will wear the ring causing it to eventually break or need to be replaced. An inch long piece of rubber hose placed on the ring at the time the bull is rung will greatly extend the life of the ring.

Some dairymen hang a short chain on the nose ring (*Figure 6*), which can help in catching the bull and may make him less aggressive and less likely to charge. It also serves an excellent contact point to prevent a bull from sticking his head over an electric fence. A long chain can get caught on equipment, trees and fencing. For this reason, don't use a chain unless you observe the bull frequently. It may be a good idea to cut through the link that attaches through the ring. If the chain gets caught on an object, it should spread and pull off preventing the ring from ripping through the nose. The chain should be light enough so it doesn't put undue pressure on the nose.



Figure 6

If it is necessary to have breeding bulls run with cows, workers need to be taught to stay alert and to notice aggressive postures by the bull. One aggressive posture prior to an attack is what is called a broadside threat. The bull will stand sideways showing off how big and powerful he is. The bull may back off if a person continues to face the bull, but if the person feels threatened, it is usually best to slowly back away from the bull to safety. Don't turn and run.