

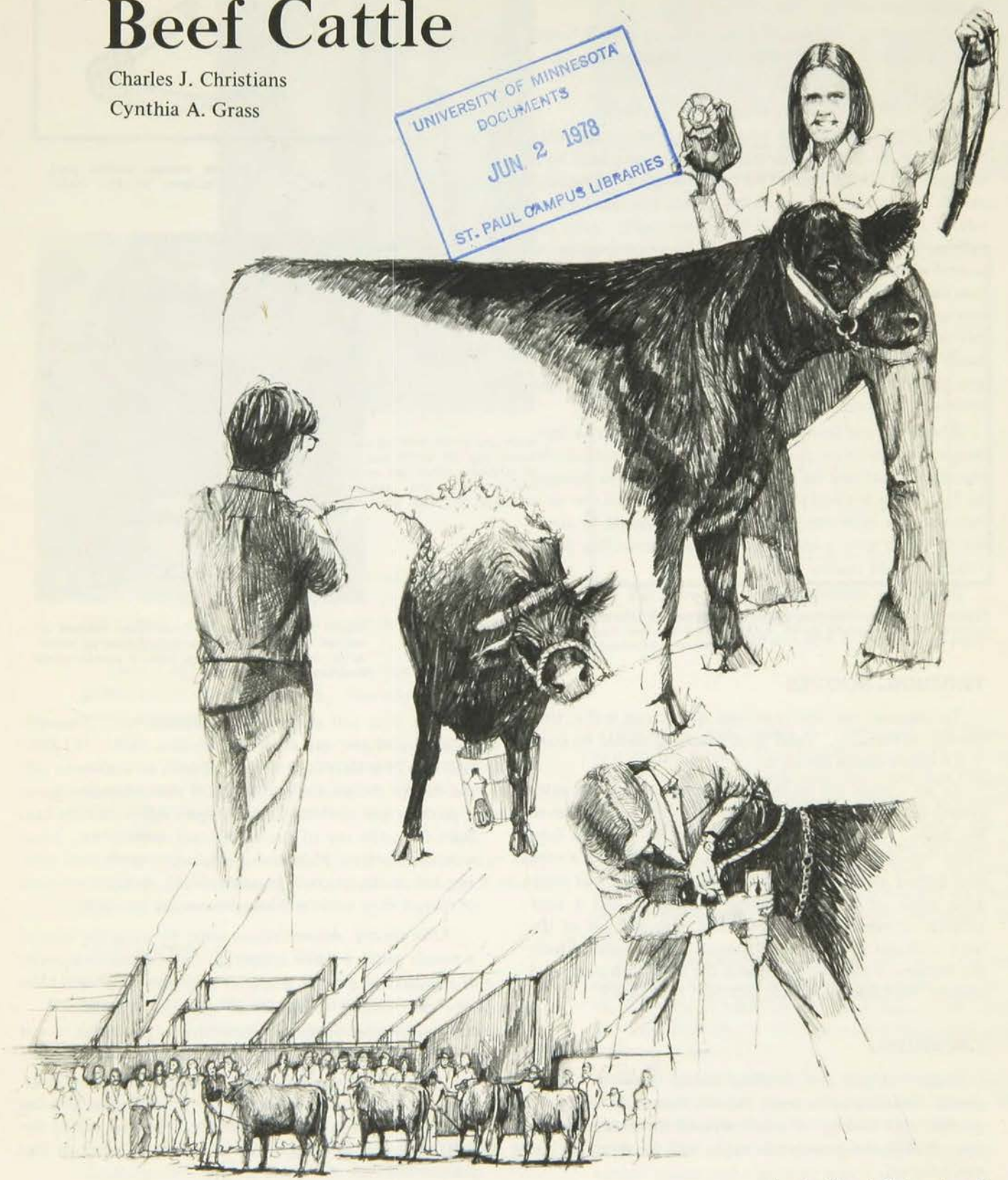
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# Fitting and Showing Beef Cattle

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Fitting and showing your beef animal can be a learning experience, and it can give you a great deal of personal satisfaction. To show your calf to its best advantage, know both his good and bad points. Compliment the good and improve upon the bad.

Remember to practice good showmanship in both breeding and market classes, not just in showmanship contests.

## TRAINING

You should halterbreak your calf at a young age when he weighs 350-500 pounds rather than waiting until he is stronger and has "a mind of his own." Begin by tying your calf in the stall with a rope halter. Leave him tied for periods of 2 to 6 hours, brushing him occasionally. After the calf has learned to stand tied, which may be a few days or several weeks, start leading him around the stall. Later lead him outside the stall with a rope halter, and gradually get him accustomed to a leather halter. Always lead from the left side and walk forward with the lead strap in your right hand. Never allow the calf to break away from you while you are training him or he will discover he is master and training will become difficult.

When your calf leads with ease, you should carry a light-weight show stick in your left hand. After your calf has become accustomed to the show stick, use it to position his feet. Place the lead strap in your left hand and the show stick in your right hand. The show stick should be about 4½ feet long with a blunt nail or screw protruding about 1 inch from the smaller end.

During the training period, lead your calf a short distance every day. About 2 months prior to the show, lead your calf at least ½ mile every day.

## TRIMMING HOOVES

To improve the way your calf stands and walks, trim hooves periodically. Final hoof trimming should be done 3 to 4 weeks before the show.

To do a good job of hoof trimming, remove the extra growth from both the point of the toes and the bottom of the hoof. Various methods allow you to trim the feet. These include throwing your calf through the use of a rope tied around the front and rear flanks, use of a foot trimming table, or a foot trimming stanchion. Use a hoof trimmer to remove the excess outer edge and toe of the hoof as shown in figure 1. Remove all dead material from the bottom of the hoof. Smooth the hoof with a rasp and scraper. **BE CAREFUL NOT TO CUT TOO DEEP.**

## GROOMING

Begin brushing and combing during the early training period. Brushing calves every day will remove dirt and keep the hair coat healthy. Use a downward stroke when brushing. A stiff rice root brush works well for removing dirt and dandruff.

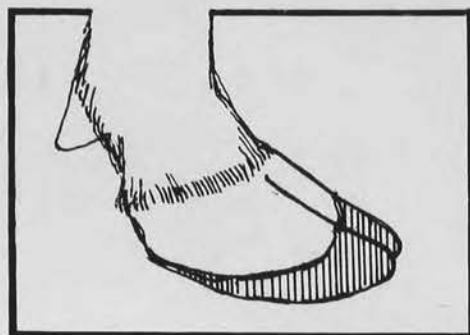


Figure 1. Trim the excess, shaded part, off the front and bottom of this hoof.



Figure 2. After the hair has been washed or wetted down, set the hair with a liner or comb. After drying, pull hair up with a scotch comb and brush until dry.

Wash your calf at least once a month until 2 months before the show, and then wash once a week. **DO NOT GET WATER IN YOUR CALF'S EARS** or wash your calf the day of the show. Wet your calf with lukewarm water if possible and work the mild detergent lather into the hair. Start from the top of the animal and work down. Rinse with clean water. Make sure all detergent is removed since any left in the hair will cause dandruff. A dilute solution of vinegar rinse water will help remove the detergent.

After rinsing, remove excess water by using the back of a scotch comb, a water scraper, or by brushing downward. If you have an electric groomer or a blower which will blow air, it can be used to blow out the hair and dry your calf.

Two months before the show it is a good idea to wet your calf down every evening with cool water to stimulate hair growth. Remove the excess water, brush the hair down then set the hair with a liner or comb. After the hair has partially dried, use a brush and scotch comb to pull up the hair until it is dry (figure 2). Combing the hair in this manner will train it to stand up.



Figure 3. Clip the complete head and face on market steers. Do not clip the ears or eyelashes. Clip the head forward of a line just behind the ears, and continue down from the jaw bone.



Figure 4. Horned and some polled breeds usually are not clipped.



Figure 5. Clip the tail from midway point between twist and tailhead. Do not clip out the tailhead, clip the longer hair from the side of the tail.



Figure 6. Clip the long hairs on top of the tailhead. Blend in with the hair on the rump.



Figure 7. Clip the longer hair off the back and shoulder. Blend in the hair to give a longer, muscular appearance.



Figure 8. The brisket, belly and flanks should be clipped to give a trimmer appearance.



Figure 10. Rat the hair of the switch to fill in the twist area. Do not allow any of the switch to hang below the hock.

## CLIPPING

If you have never clipped a calf before, first watch someone who is skilled at the job. You should practice and clip your calf 2 to 3 months before the show so you can correct the mistakes you may have made. Do the final clipping a week before the show.

Clip the entire head of steers (figure 3). When clipping the complete head, clip in front of a line just behind the halter and down across the rear of the jaw bone. **DO NOT CLIP THE EARS, EYELASHES, OR THE HAIR AROUND THE NOSE.**

Breeding cattle clipping techniques vary depending upon the breed. For example, Angus heifers should have their heads clipped. However, one can leave the long hairs on the poll to improve a prominent appearance. Do not clip heads of breeds shown with horns, such as Hereford or Shorthorn. Charolais, Polled Hereford and Polled Shorthorn heads usually are not clipped (figure 4). The long hairs on the poll are often pulled up. Limousin, Maine

Anjou, Simmental, other breed or crossbred heifer heads may be clipped depending on the refinement of the heifer.

Tails of most cattle breeds, except Shorthorns, should be clipped. Start at a point halfway between the twist and tailhead region. Clip up to the tailhead (figure 5). In clipping the tail, you may either clip around the tail or just clip the top side. The hairs on the top of the tailhead should be trimmed with a scissors or a small hand clippers so the tailhead appears somewhat square. Very little hair should be clipped off the top of the tailhead (figure 6). Leaving this hair will make the animal look longer and level rumped when properly fitted. Clip the hair over the back and the shoulder. Remove the excess hair from the top of the shoulder to give a longer appearance (figure 7).

Clipping the brisket, belly, and flanks of beef cattle gives them a neat appearance. This is especially important so steers look trim (figure 8). The belly and brisket of a breeding heifer may be clipped but, if you have a shallow bodied heifer, just trim the long hairs and do not clip too close.



Figure 9. Comb and brush the rear quarter as shown. By combing out from the tail, the quarter appears thicker.

## FINAL SHOW PREPARATION

Before you go to the show, purchase or make a wooden or metal show box for storing your showing and fitting equipment. Your show box should contain a rope halter, show halter, clippers, scotch comb, brush, curry comb, grooming comb, mild liquid detergent, wood chisel, pail, mineral oil or coat dressing, saddle soap, butch wax, hair spray, oil sprayer, rags, and a show stick.

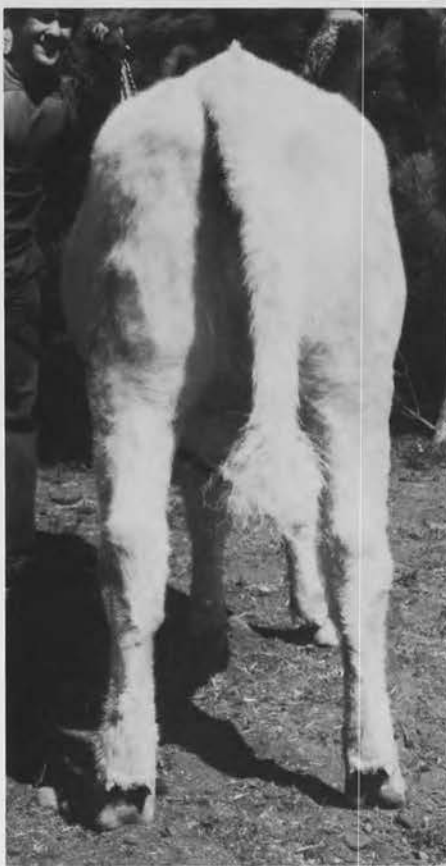
Your calf must be clean before fitting. Wash your calf early enough to assure complete drying prior to the show. A blow dryer hastens drying the hair.

To give an appearance of greater substance of bone, pull up all hair on the calf's legs. Saddle soap or butch wax can be used as a hair dressing to hold the hair up. Clip the long hair from the calf's hocks and improve rear leg appearance.

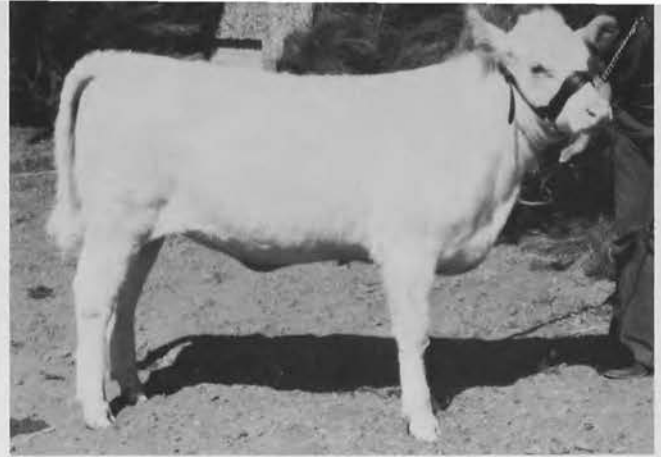
The method of brushing the hair on the body depends on the length of the hair. A long-haired calf should be groomed with the hair brushed forward and up. A light application of shaving cream makes the hair softer and easier to manage.

If your calf does not have long hair, the hair should be brushed down and smooth. Brush the hair up on the lower round. Hair on the shoulder and neck of heifers should be brushed down to emphasize femininity. Hair on top of the tailhead should be combed up as shown in figure 9 so the tailhead looks somewhat square. This also will make your calf look longer.

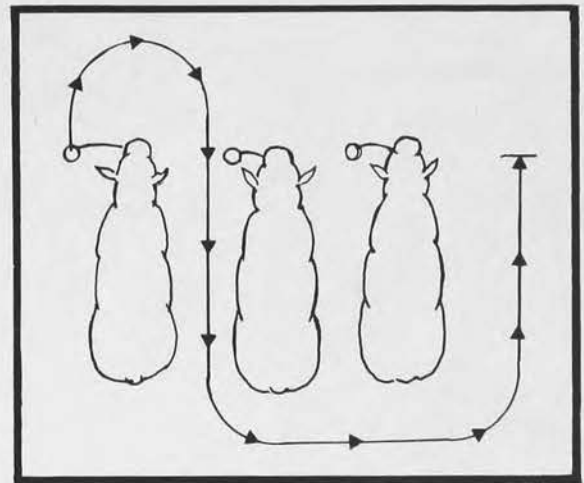
Fluff the switch by ratching the hair with a comb or fingers so the switch fills the space above the hocks and below the twist (figure 10). Do not comb the tail too often because combed out tail hair will not grow back.



**Figure 11.** This shows an ideal rear pose. Note the properly clipped and fitted tail and rump. The hair is groomed to the outside quarter to express muscle thickness. The exhibitor uses the show stick in his right hand and holds the halter in his left hand.



**Figure 12.** Note how the calf is set up squarely. Use the show stick to set up the calf. The small nail at the bottom of the show stick is used to pull the foot ahead and the point is used to push back.



**Figure 13.** Depending on space available, either back out or turn him around in the line. Move promptly to the location directed by the judge.

Make sure your calf's hooves and horns are clean. Before you go into the ring, apply a light coat of show oil to them. Black spray paint may be used on the hooves of Angus and other black hoofed animals.

Spray a light coat of show oil on the hair to make it glisten before entering the ring. Too much oil may give a greasy appearance.

Make sure your clothes are neat and clean when you enter the ring. It may be a good idea to fit your calf and then change your clothes just before entering the show ring. Wear boots or hard soled shoes to prevent injury to your feet.

Know all the important information about your calf like birth date, weight of market animals, etc., so if asked you may answer affirmatively.

## THE SHOW

Enter the ring promptly when your class is called. Even though you may be extremely excited, stay as calm and collected as possible. Remember to wear clean neat clothes, have a show stick, keep a comb in your back pocket, and have a show halter on your calf.

Lead your calf from the left side holding the lead strap in the right hand about 18 inches from the head. Hold the show stick in the left hand. Walk around the ring in a clockwise direction.

When you stop, switch the show stick and halter strap to opposite hands. Then position your calf's feet by first placing the hind feet and then the front feet (figure 11). Leave at least 3 feet between animals so you and other exhibitors have room to work and the judge can move freely around each calf. After your calf has been set up, you may use the show stick to scratch your calf's belly and calm him (figure 12). Always keep one eye on the judge and one eye on your calf. Never block the judge's view of your calf.

If you are asked to move your calf out of the line up, either back your calf out by placing pressure on the calf's shoulder vein or lead the calf ahead, turn around and bring him back through the line. Always move around your calf as shown in figure 13.

When the judge isn't looking at your calf, use the comb in your rear pocket to comb the hair in place. This is important after the judge has handled your calf.

Good luck, and remember good sportsmanship. Be a modest winner and a gracious loser.