So...you want to raise a steer?

Raising a steer for a livestock project takes a lot of work, time and effort. Are you ready for the challenge? If so, keep reading! This newsletter will provide you an overview of the ins and outs of raising a steer project, exhibiting at local fairs and, finally, showing and selling your steer at the Washington County Youth Fair.

### Project Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| August   | Begin entering data in record book  
           | Wean steer  
           | Vaccinate, de-worn and growth implant  
           | Castrate and dehorn if necessary  
           | Take beginning project pictures  
           | Begin tying and halter breaking  
           | Get started on feed  
           | Get booster shot & health paper  |
| September | Get county fair rule book  
           | Start increasing feed fed each day  
           | Begin working with a show stick to set feet  
           | Start washing animal at least once a week  |
|          | Holmes County Fair  
           | Enter premium and awards in record book  |
| October  | Practice showing animal in new setting  
           | Clip hair and practice grooming  
           | Jackson County Fair  
           | Walton County Fair  
           | Enter premium and awards in record book  |
| November | De-worm & weigh steer  
           | Wash and work out steer regularly  |
|          | Peanut Festival  
           | North Florida Fair  
           | Enter premium and awards in record book  |
| December | Weigh steer and calculate average daily gain to estimate fair weight  
           | Wash and work out steer regularly  |
| January  | Make sponsor and buyer contacts  
           | Wash, brush & work out steer regularly with show stick & show halter  
           | Review steer show rules  |
| February | Washington County Youth Fair—Entry Deadline February 1  |
Before you buy your steer...

You’ll need facilities in which to keep your steer. Your steer pen needs to be clean, dry and comfortable with good air circulation. There needs to be a place to get out of rain and bad weather as well as heat. Comfortable calves gain and finish better.

A 10’ X 10’ sheltered area is adequate for feeding and haltering. You want this area to be smaller so it is easier to catch your steer. Your steer also needs an area to exercise. An area of around 800 sq. feet is adequate.

How much will he eat?

6 pounds of feed = 1 pound of gain in a steer

- Needs to gain 77 pounds/month (30 days)
- That’s 2.5 pounds/day
- 2.5 pounds/day X 6 pounds of feed = 15 pounds of feed needed each day to gain 2.5 pounds
- 15 pounds of feed X 30 days = 450 pounds of feed/month
- 450 pounds of feed/month X 9 months = 4050 pounds of feed for the life of your project

Other Feeding Tips

- Provide clean, fresh water at all times.
- Feed a balanced ration such as commercial cattle feed.
- Feed no more than the calf can eat in 30 minutes.
- Clear uneaten feed from trough before feeding again.
- Avoid, dusty, moldy or spoiled feed.
- Start calves on a small amount of grain. Increase grain amounts slowly.
- Grain should be equally divided between feedings.
- Feed at the same time each morning and night.
- Feed a clean, high quality grass hay. Provide as much hay as he will eat and still clean up his grain. Protein content should be between 10.5% and 12%. This will promote optimal growth and market readiness.
- Weigh your steer regularly to help determine if he is growing. This will help you decide how much to feed him so he reaches his desired weight for show.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steer Weight</th>
<th>% of Body Weight Eaten Per Day</th>
<th>Approximate Feed Amounts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>12 lbs grain - 3 lbs hay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>20 lbs grain- 4 lbs hay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1100</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>24 lbs grain- 4 lbs hay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Feed growing ration (13-14% protein) up to 800 lbs.
- Feed show/finishing ration until fair (12% protein). Feed increasing levels of corn for adding finish or oats to hold steer at a desired weight.

The information provided on pages 2-3 was taken from documents created by Doug Mayo, Jackson County Agent, UF/IFAS Extension and Darrell Rothlisberger, Rich County Agent, Utah State University Extension
Teaching to Lead—the Pull, Release & Reward Method

Put steady pressure on the rope pulling towards you. Give him a little slack to see if he responds to the reward of releasing the pressure. Some calves will not budge. Be patient and deliberate. If he doesn’t want to move, tug firmly on the rope while maintain steady pressure. This will make his head bob as you tug. Often, he will take a step forward. When he does, reward him and relieve the pressure. Remember, don’t give him his head all the way—just relieve the pressure. Keep repeating this method until he leads well. This will take a week or so.

Then when he stops, you can repeat this, and he will remember to come to the pressure and be rewarded with relief! Once he responds to you well in a small pen, you can take him out to a larger pen or pasture. The more environments he can be introduced to, the better he will handle at the show.

Halter Leading

Show steers have to be “broken” or gentled down to be handled easily. Keep in mind that some calves break easier than others, but with patience and persistence, you will be able to halter break your steer.

Be slow and deliberate with movements around your calf so that you can both get used to each other. Put your steer in a small area to put his halter on. This may be in a trailer, a small pen or even a chute. Use a nylon rope halter this is 1/2 inch to 5/8 inch in diameter. Make sure the halter fits properly—the nose portion of the halter should lay on the upper third of his nose and out of his eyes. This provides control and prevents slippage. Let him drag the halter for a few days before tying him up for the first time.

Tie him about eye level to a secure fence post. Always use a slip knot when tying your steer. If he falls and you need to untie him, do so, but try not to let him go. He needs to learn that he can’t get away. Stay with him while he is tied for the first few times. You need to be able to help him if he gets in a situation and needs help getting up again.

Depending on your schedule, tie him up between 30 minutes and four hours at a time. When you let him go, don’t let him jerk the rope from your hands. This will teach him to have respect for the halter and that he can’t get away whenever he wants to.

Begin touching your steer as soon as possible. You can start with a broom or show stick. This will keep you safe and allow him to get used to being handled. Don’t poke—just scratch and rub. As soon as he will let you stand close to him, rub him with your hands. Run your hands over his body, between his legs, around his head, over his back, etc. Talk to him all the time to calm him. Be slow and deliberate with your motions. The key is to remain patient and calm.

Basic tools you’ll need

- Show Stick
- Show Halter
- Feed Trough (home)
- Feed Pan (shows)
- Water Trough (home)
- Water Bucket (shows)
- Wash Bucket & Hose w/ nozzle
- Scotch Comb & Brush
- Blower
- Pitch Fork, Push Broom, Shovel
- Wheel Barrow
- Spray Bottles
- Hair Working & Training products
- Soap (livestock or dish soap)
- Clippers
- Extension Cord
Blue Ribbon Record Books

Learning to keep accurate records is an essential part of all 4-H projects. Not only do records serve as a testament to all your hard work, they also

- Help you evaluate the true cost and value of your project
- Serve as a handy place to track expenses
- Allow you a place to reflect on what your project has meant to you
- Are a valuable tool for tracking animal health.

It’s important to work on your record books regularly from the onset of your project. Set aside an hour or so every week to record the week’s purchases and receipts and to work on your project story and pictures.

It’s a good idea to keep a “sloppy copy” on hand for your weekly work, and then transfer your work into a final “clean copy” just before it’s due.

Record books are evaluated on neatness, completeness, accuracy and evidence of work. Let’s look at each of these categories a little closer.

**NEATNESS:** Is your book clean and free from stains, rips, wrinkles, eraser marks, etc.? Is your handwriting clear and easy to read? Did you avoid scribbling over mistakes? Is your book neatly bound?

**COMPLETENESS:** Are all the blanks filled out? Use N/A if the blank is not applicable to your project. Write none if it was applicable but not done. Write a 0 if there is no value. Do you have all the required signatures? Are all the sections of adequate length?

**ACCURACY:** Are all of your calculations correct? Do you have true values and not just rounded estimates? Are your inventory, miscellaneous expenses and feed costs correctly categorized? Are your subtotals carried?

**EVIDENCE of WORK:** Does your story follow the outline? Is it of sufficient length and largely free of spelling or grammar errors? Do you at least have the minimum number of pictures that show you doing work and not just your captions should be informative and educational. They should tell the reader both WHAT you are doing and WHY you are doing it!

Here’s an example with four captions. Can you tell which is the best caption?

1. Me and T-Bone.
2. What a pretty steer!
3. I practice setting my steer up using a show stick so that he stands square for the judge.
4. Showmanship practice.

Which is the most informative and educational caption???
What is the ultimate goal of your steer project? It’s to turn out a high-quality (great tasting), high-yield (lots of meat) product that the consumer will purchase. Beef is graded for both quality and yield. The USDA grading system insures that the consumer will purchase a high quality that meets their expectation and that the renderer will pay a fair price for live cattle based on the amount of meat they will yield.

Quality is made up of a number of factors including carcass maturity, firmness, color of the lean and the amount of marbling (intramuscular fat) in the lean. The quality grades include utility, commercial, standard, select, choice and prime. Prime is the most tender, and utility is the least tender. Ideally, your market steer should grade choice at the time of the fair.

Yield grade refers to the amount of lean meat that your steer will yield. Yield grades range from 1-5. One represents a carcass that will yield the most lean meat, and five will yield the least lean meat. Ideally, your market steer will finish as a yield grade 1 meaning that the amount of boneless closely trimmed retail cuts will represent more the 52.3% of his live weight.

To learn more about grading beef cattle, consider joining the Livestock Judging Team.

Making the Grade

Biosecurity Basics

Biosecurity relates to protecting your farm, your animals and yourself from infections and illness. It is important to follow biosecurity practices no matter how big or small your farm is.

Practical Methods of Reducing your Biosecurity Risk

- Isolate all purchased animals for a minimum of two weeks.
- When you return from a show or other situations where there was contact with other animals, isolate your show animals for a minimum of two weeks.
- Watch your animals closely for at least two weeks after any exposure to observe any signs of developing disease. Call your veterinarian at the first sign of sickness.
- Make sure trucks and trailers used to haul your animals are clean and disinfected.
- Avoid sharing grooming equipment and feed and water containers. Clean and disinfect your equipment when you return from shows.
- Wash with soap and water after handling your animals and put on clean clothes. Keep your boots clean. Wear rubber boots when working with your animal and disinfect them after each use.
- Be cautious about who has contact with your animals. Visitors to your farm should wear clean clothes that have not been in contact with other animals. Make sure their shoes and boots are clean and disinfected.
- At the fair or show, be sure your animals have access to clean water and feed in containers you bring from home. Minimize nose-to-nose contact with other animals as much as possible.
Using the Show stick

Showmanship is the one area of exhibiting beef cattle over which you have the most control. In showmanship, you are judged on your abilities to control and present your steer to bring out its best characteristics. Advanced planning, practice and hard work are keys to becoming a good showman.

There are five basic uses for the show stick:

- Assist in placing the feet
- Calm the animal
- Control the animal
- Keep the top straight
- Scotch Drive

When setting up your calf, smoothly switch the lead strap from your right hand to your left hand. At the same time, switch your show stick from your left hand to your right hand. Slowly scratch your calf’s belly a couple of times to help calm your animal and then set the feet in the appropriate position.

Remember, you have two tools in your hands to set the feet. One is the halter, and the other is the show stick. If you want a rear foot to be moved back, push backward on the halter and press (do not jab) the soft tissue where the hoof is split with your show stick.

If you want a rear foot to move forward, pull forward on the halter and apply pressure with your show stick under the dew claw. It is easier for the animal to put a foot back than forward. When the rear feet are too close together, apply pressure to the inside of a leg just above the hoof, and they should stand wider. Front feet can be moved by using your boot or show stick to apply pressure in areas while pushing on pulling with the halter in the direction you want the foot to move. Younger, less experienced showmen will be safer if they use the show stick.

Placement of the feet depends on what view is provided to the judge and what makes the animal look its best. When cattle are lined up side by side in a straight line, the feet should be set at all four corners under the animal bearing their full share of its weight. At this view, the judge is looking at the rear and front of the animal.

When cattle are lined up head to tail, the feet should be set as if a professional photographer is taking a picture. The rear feet should be staggered so that the far side foot is slightly in front of the foot closest to the judge. The front feet should be set square or staggered less than the rear feet. By setting the feet in this manner, you provide the judge with a perception of depth and thickness. It also makes it easier to correct a top line and rump structure.

The show stick can also be used to correct a top line. If the top is weak and needs to be raised, simply apply pressure at the naval or the flank with the hook of the show stick. If the rump is step and the loin is high, apply pressure to this area to bring it down. Continue to scratch the animal’s belly to keep it calm.

The show stick may also be used to help control your calf while walking and to “scotch drive.” When your calf will not lead or walk, and no one is around to help you get started, push forward on the halter with your right hand, and tap the animal with the show stick on its side or rump. This will make the animal think someone is behind it, and it should start to walk.

Other show stick tips:

- Keep the point of the show stick down.
- If the calf is moving too fast, use the part of the stick between your left hand and tip for tapping the nose.
- Never hit or beat your animal with the show stick.

By Matthew Claeys, Extension Livestock Specialist, North Carolina State University