



## ***Fitting And Showing Dairy Heifers***

Several months are required to fit a dairy heifer for the show ring. Whether or not the animal is in good condition and performs well before the judge depends on the feed and care given from birth. Dairy club members should remember that winners are made at home and not at the show.

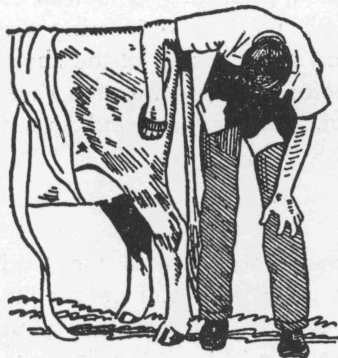


### **TRAIN THE CALF TO LEAD:**

A wild calf that cannot be handled stands very little chance of winning. Teach your calf to lead so that she will show at her best at all times. This means that you must handle your heifer a little every day. Practice making her stand properly. The feet should be placed squarely under the body but not too close together. Have your calf so well trained that she will do what you want her to do by slightly moving the halter strap.

### **BLANKETING:**

To get your calf's hair and hide in good shape, she should be kept under a blanket for at least two months before the show. Remove the blanket only to brush and clean the heifer. A good blanket may be made from "gunny" sacks sewed together with a light flannel blanket underneath.



### **BRUSHING:**

Your calf should be brushed often—at least once a day. A curry comb can be used on the flanks, legs, and belly. A brush and flannel rag should be used on the rest of her body. Always brush the way the hair lies. Coarse sandpaper tacked to a block of wood and used on the hair pulls out the loose, dead hair and trains the hair to lie down smoothly.

### **CLIPPING:**

Proper clipping is important. In general, with proper feeding, blanketing, and grooming, it will be better to avoid clipping the entire body. If your heifer has long, coarse hair, it may be necessary to clip her all over. When this is done, clip her at the start of the fitting period, at least a month to six weeks before the show. Do the final trimming just before show day. **Tail:** Leave as large a switch as possible. Blend the clipped hair in at the tailhead. **Belly:** On older heifers, in order to show the milk veins, it may be desirable to clip the entire belly up to a line drawn from the elbow to the rear flanks. Calves and younger heifers often look shallow if the belly is clipped, so most showmen do not clip the underline on young animals.

### **UDDER:**

Clip the udder all over to bring out the veining and to show its quality.

## HEAD AND NECK:

Clip the entire head and neck, and the inside and outside of the ears, taking care to blend the clipped hair in at the shoulders.

## WASHING:

After clipping, wash your heifer with soap and warm water. If she is a solid colored heifer, washing is not necessary unless she is very dirty. It is better if a thorough job of cleaning can be done with a brush. When your calf is washed, she should be blanketed immediately afterwards to keep her from catching cold and to keep her clean.

## FEET:

If your calf's feet have grown out so that she cannot stand on them normally, they should be trimmed. The toes can be trimmed with a pair of pinchers. The wall and sole of the foot can be trimmed with a chisel and mallet. Trim the soles of your calf's feet so that she can stand on them squarely without the toes touching each other. The wall of the hoof should be rasped smooth.

## HORNS:

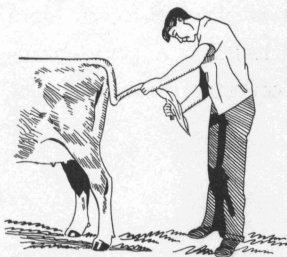
If your heifer has horns, they should be well polished. The dry rough surface can be taken off with a rasp. The horns can then be scraped with a piece of glass or a steel floor scraper. Next, smooth the horns with emery cloth. A good polish can be made by mixing powdered pumice stone or tripoli powder and sweet oil into a creamy paste. After this is applied to the horns, they should be rubbed vigorously with the hands and a flannel cloth.

## SWITCH:

Wash your heifer's switch several times before the show. The day before showing, it should be washed, and if the switch is yellow, it should be bleached with bluing and then braided while wet into six to twelve tight braids and left that way until just before entering the ring. Then the braids should be opened and the switch combed out. This gives a clean, fluffy appearance.

## BEFORE ENTERING THE RING:

Just before leading your heifer into the ring, an oiled cloth should be rubbed on her hair to smooth the hair and give it a silky appearance. A mixture of equal parts of sweet oil, glycerin and alcohol is good. To keep your calf from having an empty or gaunt appearance, it is well to have her thirsty and ready to take a medium fill just before entering the ring. To do this, keep the water from the calf on the morning of the show and then offer her drink about one-half hour before starting into the ring. Be careful that she does not drink too much water at this time, and do not let her fill up on cold water.



## HANDLING THE CALF IN THE RING:

In the ring you should walk on the left of your calf, usually with the lead strap in the right hand. When the place is reached to pose your calf before the judge, the lead strap can be changed to the left hand so that you can face your calf and see that she is standing properly. Keep her at her best all the time she is in the ring. Keep your calf alert with her feet placed squarely under each corner of the body. If there is any difference in the levelness of the ground, have her front feet on higher ground. Hold your calf's head up. Do not use sticks or canes to assist while showing a dairy animal. Do as the judge directs you, and do not move until he says move. Keep awake, watch both your calf and the judge.



Extension Dairy Husbandmen  
Texas A.&M. College System