

Why a 4-H Dairy Project?



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
TEXAS AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE
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WHY A 4-H DAIRY PROJECT ?

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4-H will open exciting new horizons for you as you work on individual projects and club activities. A 4-H dairy project is worthwhile and challenging, and offers good preparation for a career in agriculture as a businessman, veterinarian, teacher, banker, salesman, food processor or Extension agent.

DAIRY PROJECTS

Having a 4-H dairy heifer project:

- Gives you an opportunity to do interesting things while learning.
- Provides an opportunity for profit and pride in ownership.
- Contributes to your stability and development as a 4-H Club member because of the longer time required for project completion.

YOUR SCHEDULE

You may spend the first year gathering information and writing a plan before starting with one or two young calves. However, the excitement of a 4-H project probably will encourage you to get a calf and learn as you work. You will have more pride in purebred animals. These suggestions will guide you in planning your project:

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1. Visit a successful dairyman in your area with your 4-H leader or parents.
2. Ask questions about his calf growing program.
3. Secure dairy bulletins from your county Extension office.
4. Write the national association of your favorite breed for free literature.
5. Attend a dairy cattle show to feel the excitement and see techniques and training required in exhibiting dairy animals.

If you start a calf the first year, you will be proud of your animal and your work. When she is large enough you will want to take her to the dairy show; this requires training to lead and show.

If facilities and finances are available, you may want to start another young calf or two. More animals require more work, but as they grow so does their value.

By the third year your oldest calf should have produced her first calf. She is ready to start paying for her expenses. You may milk her as the family cow or you may purchase additional calves and use her as a nurse cow.

ANIMAL CARE

Keep your dairy animals healthy by preventing disease and malnutrition. Malnutrition occurs when the animal is not fed enough or is fed a feed lacking one or more essential nutrients.

A cow's value is determined by inheritance (the breeding and quality of the dam and sire) and environment (feed, shelter and care).

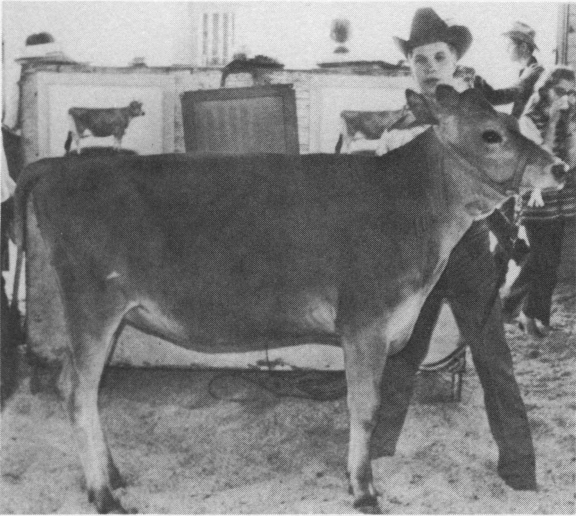
4-C CALF PROGRAM

Care of the cow before she calves. If a cow is on good pasture, she will need at least 2 pounds of light bulky grain per day for 30 days before calving. Feed 4 to 6 pounds of grain plus some hay when pasture is not available or is low in quality.

Care of cow at freshening. Check breeding chart to determine date calf is expected (about 280 days from date animal was bred). Watch closely a few days ahead of time in case cow needs assistance.

Clean quarters for the calf. This must be a place that is dry and free of cold drafts.

Colostrum in milk given by the dam the first 72 hours. It is high in minerals and antibodies and is very important in giving the newborn calf a good start and protecting it from diseases.



This 4-H member, advanced in his dairy project, purchased this registered Jersey heifer to train for showing. Experience gained by exhibiting his animal will be important in his development of responsibility.

You can raise your 4-H dairy calf on a cow, feed from a nipple bucket, or teach the calf to drink from a bucket. The calf should receive milk or a milk substitute at the rate of 10 percent of its body weight daily. During the second week of a calf's life feed it some dry grain and offer some high quality hay. Your calf should always have clean, fresh water. Feed milk or a milk substitute for the first 5 to 8 weeks. Keep the calf growing, not too fat, but make sure it has a good skeletal growth. The calf should be vaccinated to prevent black leg and brucellosis, and it should be dehorned the first few weeks of its life.

TRAINING THE CALF TO SHOW

Halter break the calf and teach it to lead early in life. The calf should have full confidence in you so she will be easy to handle and show. Experience gained by exhibiting animals is very important in your development of responsibility.

You and your calf grow up together. To your animal you are a very important person. Perhaps your 4-H dairy project may help you become an important person in whatever vocation you choose. See your local County Agricultural Agent for more information about 4-H and a dairy project.

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Texas A&M University and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating. Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914.

5M-6-70

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