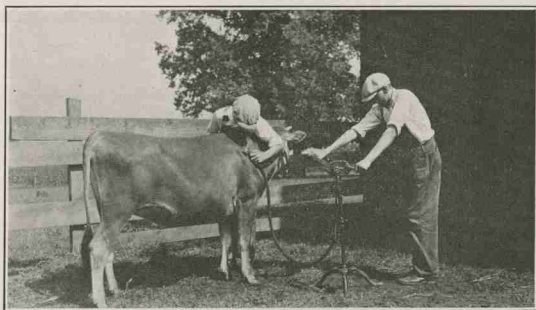


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Fitting Dairy Cattle for the Show Ring

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The breeder of dairy cattle today must consider not only the production of his cows, but must also give consideration as to their type. Production and type go hand in hand in the best breeding establishments. One of the most effective ways of establishing type and of advertising a herd is by public exhibition of dairy animals. The great dairy shows in the country such as the National Dairy Show and the state and county fairs, are excellent educational institutions. If one wishes to become acquainted with the desired type of any particular breed, all that is necessary is to study the animals that win ribbons at the good dairy shows.

Start Early

The fitting and showing of dairy cattle is an art which requires much time and work. Yet too many farmers wait until a few days before the fair to start preparing their cattle. This is especially true of breeders exhibiting only a few animals at local shows, such as county or community fairs. As a result good animals often are placed down by the judges because their owners did not spend the time and work necessary to show cattle to their best advantage.

First of all, select the animals to be shown ten or twelve weeks before the show. Be sure they have enough size for their age. Select animals with straight top lines, good middles, lots of quality and breed character. The females should have excellent udder development. Cows just fresh or about to freshen show to best advantage. All competent judges discriminate against dairy cattle that are too fat or over fattened. Properly fitted dairy animals, however, must carry enough flesh to be in good condition.

A good fitting grain ration to feed at this time consists of equal parts, by weight, of corn meal, ground oats, wheat bran and linseed meal. The amount of this mixture to feed will depend upon the size, condition, and the individuality of the animal at the beginning of the fitting period. Feed just enough grain to keep the animals in good condition, but do not give them so much that they become fat. If the cattle are thin in flesh at the beginning of the training period the amount of corn meal should be increased. Linseed oil meal is a very popular feed with showmen because it adds gloss to the

hair of the animals and gives them a soft pliable hide. Along with the grain ration should be fed good legume hay, corn silage or beet pulp.

Each animal must be taught to lead and to stand squarely on its feet. This training must begin at the start of the fitting period and be kept up each day until the animal enters the show ring. There is certainly little chance of an animal winning that you have to pull around the show ring.

It is rarely necessary to clip the dairy animal all over. It is better to shed the long hair out by means of blanketing and grooming. Those parts of the animal that cannot be blanketed should be carefully clipped. These are, of course, the head, neck, udder and tail above the switch. These parts should be reclipped about two days before the show.

Brushing, Washing and Blanketing

Brushing helps to stimulate the circulation of the blood in the skin and gives the animal a glossy coat. Brush them several times each day.

Frequent washing is another means of obtaining a good condition of hair and hide. Washing once a week is sufficient. In washing use plenty of tar soap and water and thoroughly rinse off all soap.

Keep the animal blanketed at all times in order to keep the coat clean and hide in good condition. It helps to make the coat lie smooth and gives the animal a finished appearance which cannot be obtained otherwise.

Scrape down the rough portion of the horns by the use of a file. The edge of a piece of broken glass if often used after filing. After the horns have been worked down nicely, rub them with emory cloth to put on a smooth surface. For polishing mix a paste using sweet oil and powdered pumice stone. Apply this paste to the horns and rub with a woolen cloth. The hoofs should be carefully trimmed and thoroughly scraped. Then apply linseed oil and rub with a flannel cloth.

Showing the Animal

At the call of the class the animal should be led into the ring with an attractive, properly fitted halter. In leading hold the halter in the right hand. An exhibitor should have just one thought in mind while showing in the ring and that is to give his entry every possible chance to show to advantage. By this is meant that when the animal is standing, its feet are properly placed, back straight, head up and alert.

I have mentioned only the most important points in preparing dairy cattle for the show ring. Many other minor points can only be learned by the experiences of showing. However, if every exhibitor planning to show dairy cattle this fall will start now in putting into practice these major points and keep right at it until the animals enter the show ring, the improved appearance of the cattle will almost seem unbelievable.