

Showing & Fitting

Keys to Success

You probably do not have to travel far to show your heifer at a county fair or area livestock show. Most state Angus associations have a junior Angus show each year, too. Contact the junior advisor in your state for information on state Angus shows. The American Angus Association also sponsors several regional previews and regional shows in the summer as well as the National Junior Angus Show. It is important that you know the ownership and entry deadlines in order to participate in some state and regional shows. These deadlines and other show information are on the Internet at www.njaa.info.

START WHEN YOUR CALF IS YOUNG

If you plan to exhibit your calf you will need to halter break and train it to lead. The best time to halter break is at weaning, when it is small enough to be easily handled. This is safer and less stressful for you and your calf. Some calves take longer to break and some never break to lead. Genetics play an important role in the calf's attitude and its willingness to be trained.

There are several philosophies of how to halter break an animal.

Find a strategy that will work best with your resources and time. The goal should be to minimize stress for all concerned — the calf, equipment and you.

To get started you will need a rope halter, preferably nylon and 1/2 to 5/8-inch (in.) in diameter; a confined area or chute where you can corner the animal; and a sturdy place to tie the calf.

Try to arrange your gates so you will have a small pen where you can halter your calf. If possible, run several calves together in a small, almost crowded pen. Enter the pen slowly and start scratching the calves on the back, not on the head. At first they will try to get away from you, but they cannot in a small pen. Soon they will stand quietly while you scratch them.

Some herdsmen halter the calf and let it drag the halter for a few days prior to tying it up. This lets the



calf get used to the pressure when it steps on the rope repeatedly. Others immediately tie the calf and remove the halter each night. They say this reduces the calf's stress and frustration.

In either situation, the first time you tie the calf, tie it close to the pole or board, not allowing much slack in the rope (about 12 in.). Also, do not tie the calf with its head up,

allow the calf to hold it in a natural position the first few times it's tied.

Leave the calf tied for a short duration. It is important to keep checking the calf every 15-20 minutes to make sure it does not get in a position to hurt itself.

Begin talking to and touching the calf as soon as possible. Combing and brushing helps calm the calf. The more time you can spend with the calf, the sooner you will develop a relationship and trust.

Playing a radio also can help calm the calf and get it used to different noises.



When releasing the calf, do it calmly without jerking on the halter. If the calf starts to pull and get away try to keep your hold. Once a calf gets away, it thinks it can do it again.

After three days or when the calf does not pull on the halter as much, start tying the calf with its head up so it gets used to standing with its head up and its feet underneath it. On the fourth day try to lead the calf, and if possible, try taking it to the wash rack.

When teaching the calf to lead, voice reward is very important. Accept a few steps as an accomplishment. You must be patient and calm.

Once calves are accustomed to the halter, begin leading them. Remember to be patient—training takes time. It also is important that the calves do not learn they can get away from you. Once they are broke to lead, practice stopping and turning the calves so they behave and maneuver the way you want.

It is important to practice with a show stick before going to a show. Scratching with the show stick should calm the calf when it is introduced to new environments.

Using a show stick, teach your calf to stand correctly. His or her feet should be positioned squarely. Once the feet are set, use the show stick to calmly scratch the calf's underline or chest. This keeps the topline up and helps calm your calf. Prac-

tice at home. It takes time for an animal to accept the stick touching its belly and feet.

Use a leather show halter a few times at home so that the calf gets used to the chain under its chin. For a proper fit, the nose piece should be up on the nose about halfway between the nose and eyes. A black leather show halter that has been oiled is preferred.

Remember, showmanship and grooming must be practiced at home in order for them to be effective in the show ring.

FITTING

There is nothing more satisfying to a 4-H, FFA or NJAA member than presenting a well-fit calf. Even more gratifying is the feeling they have when they know they have done the fitting themselves.

The difference between grading an A for fitting and a C could be the effort at home. As you stand around the show ring at any event, you can tell which junior members have done their homework before going to the show.

The object to fitting is getting the cattle to look the best they possibly can, while still presenting them naturally. To achieve this goal takes a lot of time and effort. Caring for and exhibiting a show animal is a big responsibility, but it is a rewarding experience.

Teaching someone how to fit and clip is hard. Beginners should watch an experienced fitter, then practice doing it themselves.

No two fitters clip or fit cattle exactly the same. Each one has his or her own style and ideas. Not all animals are alike, and each requires different fitting techniques.

HAIR CARE

Nutrition plays an important role in the growth and hair condition of a show animal. Each calf's individual requirements may vary. Consult your local nutritionist to develop a ration that fits your resources and your calf's genetics. Some ingredients to consider are:

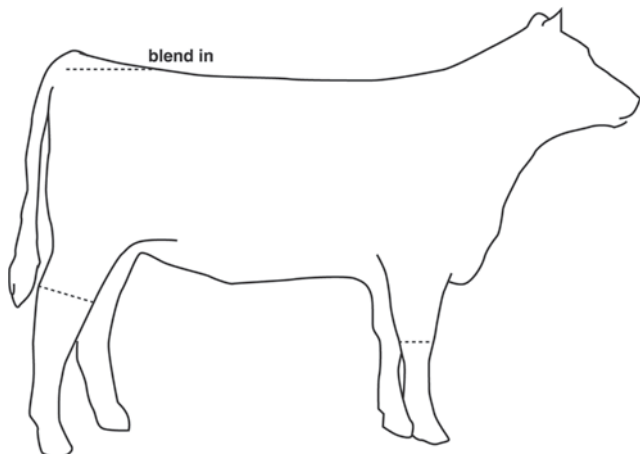
1. Protein (i.e. a ration with 12-14% protein — a 60:40 oats:corn ration)
2. Minerals and salt block
3. Vitamin A
4. Routine worming
5. Beet pulp or cottonseed hulls to act as a filler, expanding the animal's stomach. Cottonseed also helps keep oil in hair.

Just like a calf's nutrition requirements and attitude, a calf's hair coat is related to its genetics. The best way to stimulate hair growth is brushing, especially in the hot summer months.

Body clipping or shearing prior to the show season promotes fresh hair growth (Illustration A).

ILLUSTRATION A

Pre-show-season shearing



Many junior exhibitors who want their animals to look their best at the National Junior Angus Show in July shear off their animals in March (90-120 days prior to show season). If using a pair of sheep head clippers (P7112 blades), shear up on the calf's body and down on the lower quarter and legs. If using regular flat head clippers (84AU blades), clip down on the entire animal. Leave some hair on the poll, tailhead and lower hind legs.

During the summer, bedding the animal in a dark place during the day shortens the day length and promotes hair growth. Keeping the calves under fans and/or misters will help cool and circulate the air.

Keeping the animal clean and washing once a week will help promote new hair growth. Rinsing the calf daily with a conditioning product promotes new hair growth and helps train the hair.

If an animal's hair is dry, spray the calf with an oil, blowing it in with a blower before washing.

External parasite and ringworm control also are important to keeping the animal and its hair coat healthy. Ivomec® is the most common product used to reduce parasites.

Watch carefully for the onset of ringworm. It begins as a round, scaly spot that will show hair loss. It spreads rapidly on the body, to other cattle and to people. If ringworm occurs, consult your veterinarian for treatment.

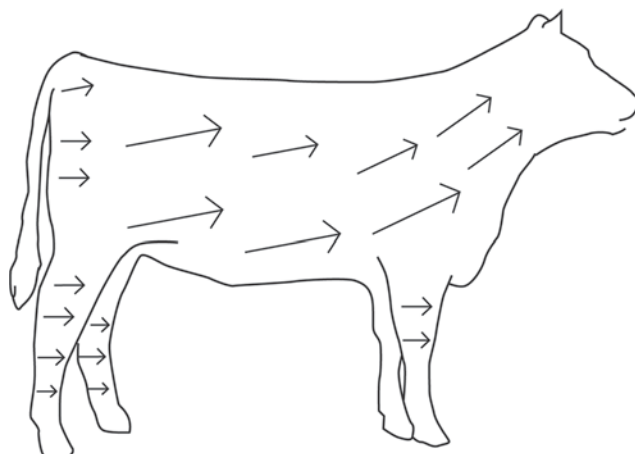
WASHING

When washing, use a mild dishwashing soap. Be sure to rinse thoroughly to prevent dry skin and hair.

After washing you need to replace the natural oils using a conditioner. You should dip the tail in the conditioner and pour the remainder over the animal's back. In the summer, you can add fly repellent to the dip to control flies.

ILLUSTRATION B

Brushing and combing pattern



Brushing is the key to a well-trained hair coat. While at home and at a show, brushing and combing will promote hair growth. After rinsing or washing an animal, brushing and then blowing the animal dry will help set the calf's hair in the desired angle. While at a show, blowing out the calf and brushing it each time it gets up helps keep the calf clean and presentable.

After washing/rinsing:

1. Remove excess water with the backside of the comb, raking in a downward motion.
2. Brush all of the hair downward, removing curls.
3. Brush the hair forward toward the front shoulder and neck.
4. For animals with more hair, brush at a 45-degree angle, as pictured, and work toward desired angle. The outside and inside of the front and back legs should be brushed straight forward.
5. Using a blower (moving from top to bottom, front to back) helps train the hair. Rest the tip of the nozzle next to the skin and move slowly in an arc pattern for best results. Be sure not to create lines in the animal when using the blower.

After rinsing, brush and blow the animal dry (Illustration B). Before the animal is completely dry, mist with a sheentype spray to help set the hair, then finish drying.

CLIPPING

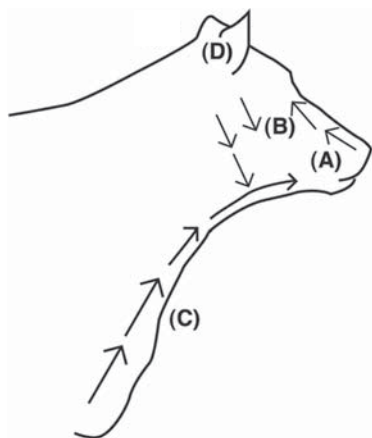
Clipping is one of the most rewarding parts of the entire fitting process, because you can actually see the changes you make to an animal.

The key to a successful clip job is knowing an animal's faults and weaknesses and being able to compliment these faults. Before starting to clip, evaluate the animal carefully and trim off the hair accordingly. It's important to realize not all animals are clipped alike.

ILLUSTRATION C

Clipping the head

Always clip against the natural direction of the hair with the 84AU blades to achieve a close, smooth job. Approximately three weeks before the show, shear the neck, brisket and head. A few days before you leave for the show, reclip the animal's face. Try not to make lines too distinct; keep it neat and natural.



- A. Clip up on the nose and forehead.
- B. Clip down on the cheek to reduce lines. Blend carefully.
- C. Clip up on the brisket and blend carefully. This promotes a longer extension of the neck.
- D. Hair is thinned on the ears.

Mistakes and gaps will happen and serve as a good learning tool. The easiest way to learn is to pick up a pair of clippers and start practicing.

Before clipping be sure your animal is clean and restrain it in a blocking chute for its safety and yours.

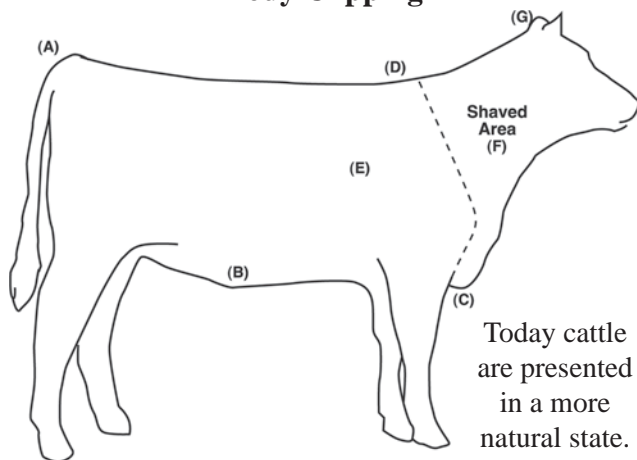
Clippers need to be in good order and working properly. Be sure to oil and lube before starting. When purchasing clippers, there are several brand names to consider: Oster, Lister, Wahl, Heiniger, Andis, and Premier just to name a few. You will need:

1. A regular pair of flat heads. Use standard, flat 84AU blades or the plucking blade for shaving areas where you wish to leave more hair.
2. A pair of sheep heads. Beginners should use a C-type head with the 20-tooth goat comb blade (P7112 blade).
3. A pair of inexpensive, small, adjustable clippers (Andis). These are less noisy and are used for the final touches.

Approximately three weeks before a show, clip the head, brisket and neck (Illustrations C & D). Clipping usually takes at least two sessions — before leaving for the show and at the show. Most of the clipping is usually done at home with the last-minute touches at the show. The hair is usually trimmed in an upward and forward motion. Body clipping or blocking out the animal can take 45 minutes or more, depending on the amount of hair and the clipper's experience level.

ILLUSTRATION D

Body Clipping



Today cattle are presented in a more natural state.

Tail and tailhead (A) — The tailhead area is used to enhance the visual effect of a level hip. It can add body length and thickness by the way it is clipped. Today most fitters clip the hair above the grow bone tight (see also Illustration E).

Belly (B) — Using the sheep heads, trim the long hairs on the belly to give it a clean appearance.

Brisket (C) — Shave the brisket up with flat head clippers when shearing the head. Try not to make a distinct line. Blend in with neck hair.

Point of shoulder (D) — Use this as a guide point when shaving the front end (three weeks prior to show). Hair should be trimmed very short in this area to reduce prominence. Under the shoulder point — This hair and some neck hair is left long and used to blend in a prominent shoulder.

Behind the shoulder (E) — The hair is left as long as possible in this area to ensure proper blending of the shoulder joint.

Neck (F) — Three weeks before the show many Angus fitters clip out the neck on females from the point of the shoulder forward. Using sheep heads (P7112 blades) go up or with the flat heads (84AU blades) clip down. This makes the females appear more feminine. Top of shoulder joining neck — Hair should be utilized in this area to give the appearance of a smooth joining of these two parts.

Poll (G) — Leave this hair on the head to give added head length and youthfulness.

Ear — Trim the hair on the ear.

HOOF TRIMMING

Proper hoof trimming can help the animal move more freely. Trimming should be done by someone with experience. Permanent injury or movement disorders can be caused by inexperience.

EVERYDAY SUPPLIES

- rice-root or rice-root-mix brush
- soft brush
- plastic brush
- Scotch comb
- sprayers
- Show Sheen, rag oil
- blower
- feed pans
- water buckets
- extension cords
- broom, pitch fork, shovel
- pliers, hammer, and other tools
- neck rope
- extra halter
- blocking chute
- fan



WASHING SUPPLIES

- soap (Dove, Ivory, Joy, etc.)
- vinegar
- hair conditioner
- scrub brush
- hose
- nozzle
- wash bucket
- dip bucket
- fly repellent



CLIPPERS

- flat heads
- Andis or small, two-speed clippers
- sheep heads
- blades
- clipper lube and oil

SHOW-DAY SUPPLIES

- Scotch comb
- clippers
- adhesive (Body Adhesive, EZ Comb, Prime Time or Formula-1)
- tail comb, glue and ties (if needed)
- show oil (Final Touch, Final Bloom, Final Mist)
- show foam
- scissors
- show product remover (Hocus-Pocus, Unfit, purple oil)

RING-SIDE SUPPLIES

- show halter
- clean Scotch comb
- show stick
- show harness
- nose lead (for bulls)



A calf's hooves should be trimmed on a regular basis, every 30-60 days. If trimming prior to a show, give the animal at least a month to heal.

AT THE SHOW

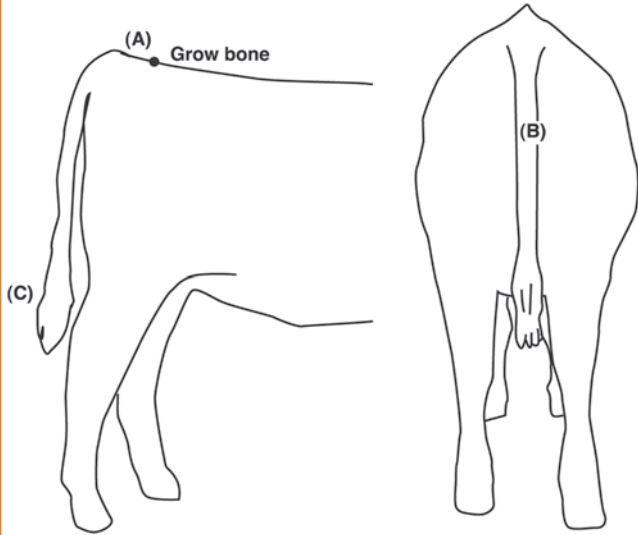
When traveling to a show, it is important to keep the calf eating and healthy. If traveling a long distance to a show, some fitters suggest not feeding the morning you leave. After arriving at the show that evening, feed a half feeding.

In many cases, the longer you are at a show the more accustomed the calf becomes to its surroundings. While at the show, it is important to keep the calf clean and as comfortable as possible. If possible, every time the calf gets up blow it out and brush the hair.

The night before the show you may want to only allow the calf to drink half of its normal water intake. Restricting water will hopefully make the calf drink more on show day, thus creating more of a fill for a deeper-bodied, more voluminous appearance.

ILLUSTRATION E

Clipping the tail and tailhead



- A.** Extend the hair at the tailhead so it has the appearance of a corner, making the animal look longer hiped. The tailhead hair may be held up with glue and then trimmed to the desired shape.
- B.** The hair down the middle of the tail is clipped into a short "V." This gives the appearance of more width between the pins.
- C.** Today the tail is bobbed or trimmed for a natural look.

SHOW-DAY PREPARATION

Prior to fitting on show day, the animal should be rinsed, dried, fed and given time to rest. If the show starts at 8 a.m., try to have the calf washed, dried and fed by 6:30 a.m. Some fitters wait to water prior to showing, but you may choose to water after feeding so as not to break the established routine. If the show starts late or runs long, you can refeed a half feeding at noon. A proper fill is important the day of the show. Beet pulp, cottonseed hulls, water and alfalfa are all stomach fillers.

Allow plenty of time to fit, about 30-45 minutes per animal. There are several show product companies that offer products for different hair types. For more information about products, contact your local supply dealer.

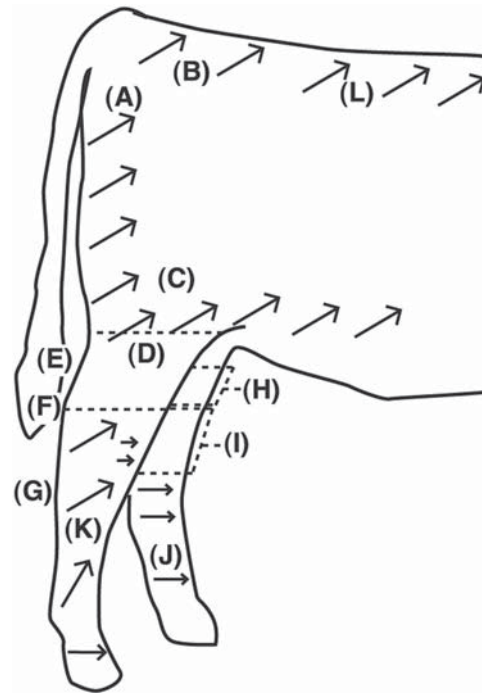
Here are some fitting tips:

A. Body hair

1. Apply show foam over the entire body (except the legs). Brush it in and blow it dry. The foam holds the hair and brings up the under coat.
2. Another option is misting the calf with a show product such as Base Coat, Zoom Bloom, or Show Sheen to set the hair. When using those

ILLUSTRATION F

Hindquarter clipping (side view)



- A.** Hair should be brushed out and around the hind quarter to add dimension when viewing the animal from the rear.
- B.** Hair in this area is used to fill in the hip to give a level appearance from the hooks to pins.
- C.** Hair is pulled up and out and held in place to add the appearance of muscularity.
- D.** Hair is left longer to add width to the lower quarter.
- E.** Hair is left in this area above the hock to reduce hock prominence.
- F.** The ball of the hock is shaved to the skin in about a 3-inch-long area to reduce hock prominence.
- G.** Long hairs are trimmed after boning the leg (pulling the hair up and out) to give the appearance of a more structurally correct heavier boned leg.
- H.** Trim this area beginning right above the hock area to straighten the appearance of the leg.
- I.** Trim the long hair here to fill the hock joint area and to straighten the appearance of the leg.
- J.** Trim this area and around the entire leg to give a straight, symmetrical appearance.
- K.** The hair on the inside and the outside of the cannon bone is pulled slightly forward to help add hair length to the front of the leg.
- L.** The loin area on steers and heifers should be clipped flat on top and all of the hair left on the loin edge.

products you need to have the time to blow it in using a blower for the hair to really pop out (the more you blow the hair, the more volume it gets).



B. Tail

Today most fitters are leaving an animal's tail natural — just trimming it.

If you choose, you can put the tail up using a rattling comb, glue and a tail tie if needed. The completed symmetrical ball should be in a position to add balance to the animal. A tail too high will make the animal look heavyfronted.

C. Legs

Use spray glue to hold the leg hair in place to be clipped, but remember, the American Angus Association does not allow coloring agents, so use adhesive sparingly.

• Back legs

1. Bone the legs, spraying adhesive on one area at a time and pulling the hair up and forward with a scotch comb. Do not bone the legs too high on the hindquarter. The leg and the hindquarter must join as smoothly as possible. Pull the inside back legs below the hock forward and the back $1\frac{1}{8}$ th of the leg backward creating a finned look, with the hair on the front and back below the hock meeting at a peak.
2. Clip the legs for the final effect using sheep heads with P7112 blades.

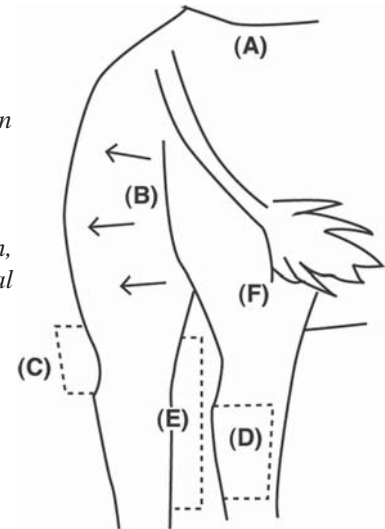
• Front legs

1. Bone the front legs below the knee forward

ILLUSTRATION G

Hindquarter clipping (rear view)

The rear view is perhaps the most important view when evaluating cattle. It shows muscularity, muscle design, cleanness, condition, height and structural correctness in the animal.



- A. Hip hair is very important in order to give the animal a level hip.
- B. The area close to the tail is trimmed very short in an outward motion, leaving the most hair on the hind quarter edge. This adds thickness and dimension.
- C. The area from the hock to the lower stifle is blended in to add muscle shape.
- D. The outside hock area is trimmed very short to add to the appearance of balance and extension.
- E. The inside hock area and twist can be shaved or trimmed short to add height.
- F. The twist area can be trimmed and shaped to give the appearance of more muscle.

(inside and outside) using adhesive. This gives the animal the appearance of more bone.

D. Final preparation

1. In hard-to-hold areas, including the tailhead, you can use spray adhesive to glue the hair in place.
2. Put on the show halter.
3. Check the calf's fill. Offer water or hay if needed.
4. Before going to the make-ready area mist the animal with a show oil to add shine. Shows sponsored by the American Angus Association do not allow aerosol cans in the make-ready area, so have preparation complete at your chute.

AFTER THE SHOW

Make sure to wash out all fitting products and replace the oils in the calf's hair. For best results, wash within 24 hours. Do not forget to keep brushing and working with your animal to keep it looking good for your next show.