

4-H Market Steer Handbook:

Housing and Facilities

Because of the mild climate, expensive, elaborate housing is not required. An open shed and fenced lot will be adequate.

There are many types of housing that are suitable for market steers. These may range from a small shed to a larger shed or barn, depending on the number of steers you have to feed. The shed should be dry and well-ventilated so the animal can keep cool during the summer and warm during the winter. A covered shed that measures 12 feet X 12 feet and 10 feet high would be adequate for one steer. Three sides of the shed should be boarded and the south side should be left open. Locate the shed in one corner of the lot. Build a gate on the side of the shed, opposite from the fence, that can be used to help catch the steer. Leave the gate open during the day to allow the steer free access to the shed.

The steer lot should be just that - a lot where steers are kept. Don't let horses or other cattle run with your show steers. A lot that is 100 feet X 100 feet should be about the right size for one to four steers. Give the calves enough room to exercise, but not so much space they're hard to find to bring up to feed. Locate the steer lot on well-drained land with a good grass sod so you won't have a problem with mud.

In addition to the housing, you will also need to provide feed and water for your calf. Although the water troughs may be placed either inside or outside the shed, it is best to keep the feed box inside to keep the feed dry from rain or snow.

The feed boxes or bunks should be approximately 18 to 24 inches above the ground or floor, 24 inches wide and 6 inches deep. Each animal should have about 2 ½ linear feet of feeding space. If hay is fed, the hay racks should be in a dry area away from the feed trough.

Outside temperature and animal size will determine how much water a steer will drink each day. A 1000-pound animal will drink about nine gallons of water per day when the outside temperature is 50 F. However, the same animal will drink approximately 18 gallons of water per day when the outside temperature is 90 F. The size of the water tank or trough will depend upon the number of animals.

Keep fresh, clean water available at all times. During the winter, be sure to remove ice from the water tank or use a heated tank so that the water is available to your animals.

Another requirement for the steer is clean, dry bedding. Straw, sawdust and sand are good bedding materials.

Changing the bedding frequently not only provides the steer a clean, dry place to lie down, but helps to reduce fly problems, to keep the shed cooler because manure and urine generate heat and prevents stains on the steer's hair coat caused by manure and urine.