

# 4-H Market Steer Handbook: Clipping and Blocking

Clipping is most important to enhancing the steer's appearance. It will not actually change, but when done properly it can minimize faults and enhance strong points of your steer. A professional job of clipping and blocking is learned and developed through much time, patience and experience. It is an important part of show preparation that requires assistance from your parents, 4-H leader or older 4-Her's. However, over time, you should develop clipping and blocking skills.

You will need large animal electric clippers with a sharp set of blades. A blocking chute will help hold the steer still and make the job easier.

To do the actual blocking and clipping, you will need a set of small animal clippers, sheep shears or goat head clippers. If you are just beginning, you should start with the small clippers. Goat head or sheep shears are dangerous and should not be used until you have mastered the art of blocking.

There are many different ideas on clipping steers with no clear cut right or wrong way. However, you must analyze your own steer and realize his strong and weak points. Each steer must be clipped to enhance or minimize these points:

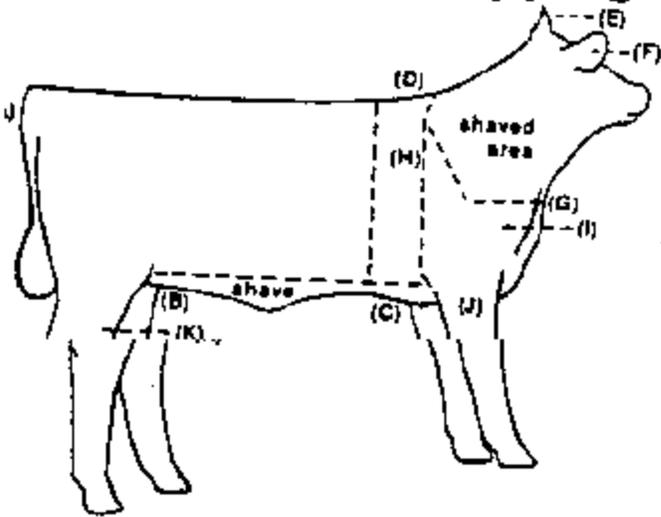
- T** Clip the head close to the skin. You may leave the hair on the poll to give it more prominence and to give the head a longer appearance. Do not clip the hair in the ears. Blend the hair line where the neck and head join.
- T** Next clip the throat and brisket area. Again, blend the hair lines and block the neck and crest down as close as possible to make the front end appear trimmer.

**T** Longer hair may be left behind the sheath to give the effect of a deeper body, being careful not to clip too high on the sides. Take special care in blending these lines. Keep in mind that distinctive hair lines or drastic contrast in hair length takes away the illusion of length, and this is undesirable.

**T** The tail should be clipped close, starting about 8 or 9 inches from the top and clipping upwards to the tail head. Be sure to leave enough hair on the tail head to square it off when you dress him.

**T** Using the small clippers, trim all the long hairs off the body. The objective is to make the steer look as smooth as possible all over. Leave the hair slightly longer. Where you want more bulge and muscle expression. Block the tail head as squarely as possible. Block the top line to appear level from the side and rounded and uniformly turned when viewed from the rear. Keep in mind that fat is flat and square, and desirable muscle is smooth and rounded. Watch and study more experienced people clip and block cattle and practice your techniques.

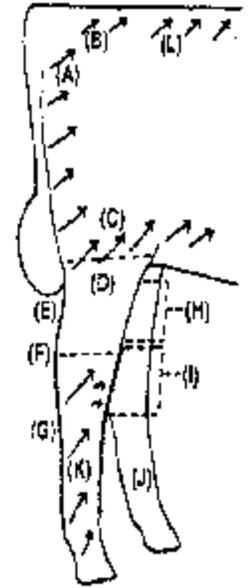
# Guidelines for Clipping



- A. Tail and tailhead - the tailhead is used to enhance the visual effect of a level hip. It can add body length or thickness by the way it is clipped.
- B. Rearflank - Use this as a guide for beginning the bellyline. This can be used to create an illusion of more volume or less volume. By lowering the line from the standard clip and leaving long hair from the navel area back, a look of greater volume is achieved.
- C. Point of elbow - Use this as a guide for ending the bellyline .
- D. Top of shoulder joining neck - Hair should be utilized in this area to give the appearance of a smooth joining of these two parts.
- E. Poll - Leave the hair on the head to give added head length and youthfulness.
- F. Ear - Leave most of the hair on the ear; thinning is acceptable.
- G. Point of shoulder - Use this as a guide point when clipping the front end. Hair should be trimmed very short in this area to reduce prominence.
- H. Behind the shoulder - The hair is left in this area to ensure proper blending of the shoulder joint.
- I. Under the shoulder point - This hair and some neck; hair is left long and used to blend in a prominent shoulder.
- J. Front leg - Usually clip to the knee for breeding cattle to show angularity.
- K. Front of rear legs - Clip this area to help give the appearance of a straighter hind leg.

# Clipping the Tail

- A. Extend the hair at the tailhead so it has the appearance of a corner.
- B. The hair down the middle of the tail is clipped into a short 'V'.
- C. A tailhead with a slight upswing on the end will help to level out the hip.
- D. The tailhead hair may be held up with wax or glue and then trimmed to the desired shape.



# Blocking the Hind Leg

- A. Hair in this area should be brushed around the hindquarter to add dimension when viewing the animal from the rear.
- B. Hair in this area is used to fill in the hip to make it appear to be more level from hooks to pins.
- C. Hair is pulled up and out and held in place to add muscularity.
- D. This area is trimmed very short on steers, but hair is left longer on breeding cattle.
- E. Hair is always left in this area above the hock to reduce hock prominence.
- F. The ball of the hock is shaved to the skin about a three-inch long area to reduce hock prominence.
- G. The long hairs only are trimmed after boning the leg (pulling the hair up) to give the appearance of a straighter leg.
- H. Shave or trim this area close to the skin, beginning right above the hock area to straighten the leg. (very important)
- I. Leave all of the long hair here to fill in the hock joint area and to straighten the leg. (very important)
- J. Trim this area around the entire leg to give a straight symmetrical appearance.
- K. The hair on the inside and outside of the cannon bone is pulled slightly forward to help add hair length to the front of the leg.
- L. The loin area should be clipped flat on top and the hair left on the loin edge should be rounded.

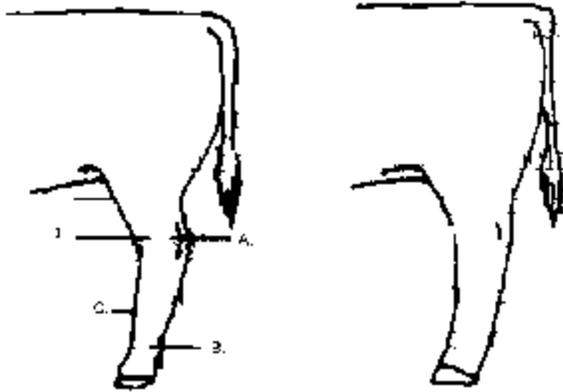
## Correcting the Sickie Hock

Most incorrect legs are the result of too much set to the leg, or sickie hocks. To make the crooked leg appear straighter, pull the hair up and into the crook above the hock. Clip all the hair off inside the hock and taper down the back of the leg. On the front of the leg, opposite the hock, pull the hair up and forward and leave long. From this point upwards to the flank, clip the hair relatively short.

## Correcting Post-Legs

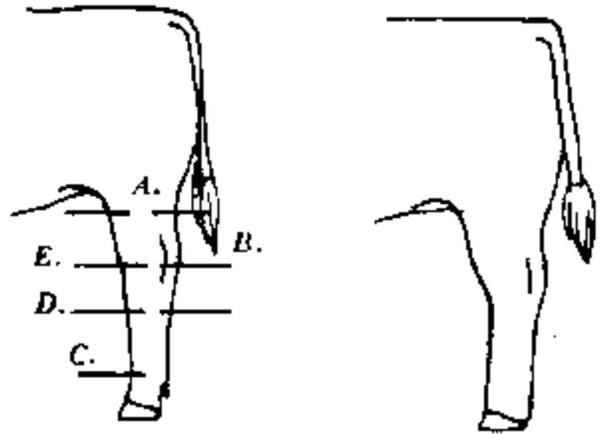
Legs which are too straight, or "post-legged," are corrected the opposite way from crooked legs. Clip close above the hock and pull the hair back on the hock. Pull the hair up and forward on the lower front side of the cannon. Clip the front area opposite the hock close, and from there upwards pull the hair up and leave long.

## Correcting the Sickie Hock



- A. Comb hair into the crook above the hock.
- B. Taper hair on back side of leg. Clip hair off inside of hock.
- C. Comb hair up and forward and leave long.
- D. Clip hair short in this area.

## Correcting Post-legs



- A. Clip hair close to give effect of an indentation.
- B. Pull hair back on hock.
- C. Comb hair up and forward and leave hair longer.
- D. Clip hair short to generate a slight angle.
- E. Taper longer hair from flank to shorter hair at hock.