

# 4-H Market Steer Handbook: Market Steer Selection Criteria

## Breed

The breed you choose to show is not important. Keep in mind there are good calves and bad calves in every breed and every breed has something good to offer. Crossbred club calves have become very popular the last few years in an effort to combine the good traits of different breeds. If you have a favorite, try to select a suitable calf of that breed or cross.

## Other Selection Criteria

You should consider several other factors when you select your calf; frame, size, muscling, structural correctness, style, disposition and balance should be evaluated in selecting a steer. Keep in mind a picture of a moderately large-framed, heavy-muscled, correctly finished, stylish steer as a result. The calf chosen to become this finished steer should be tall, long-bodied, clean and free of excess "leather" through the throat and brisket. He should be straight-topped, long, level in his rump, and correctly set on his feet and legs.

The correct type and amount of muscling can be difficult to determine in a young calf. Round, bunched-muscled calves will generally be short-rumped and show seams and creases in their rear quarters. These steers may appear to be heavier-muscled, but they are undesirable in the muscle structure and do not develop into desirable show steers. Also, beware of narrow, flat-quartered steers who lack muscle expression.

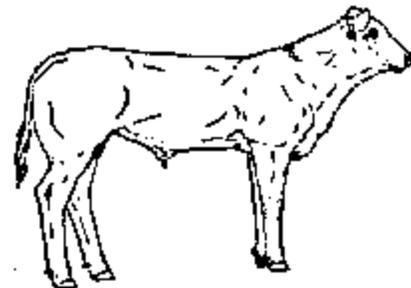
Select a well-balanced, stylish calf that is upheaded and alert. These factors will be an asset in the show ring. It will be nearly impossible to find a steer that perfectly fits all these descriptions. However, select a calf that possesses a desirable combination of traits, go the "extra mile" when taking care of him and success will be related. A good steer and a good youngster are hard to beat!

## Much Should You Pay for Your Steer?



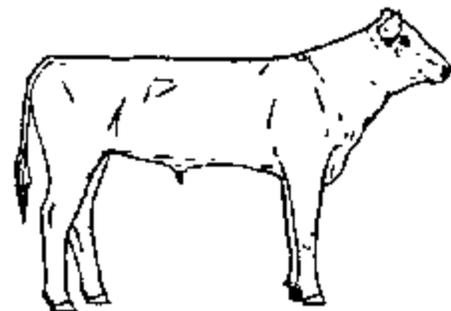
1.

*1-Select straight-lined, stylish, meaty, moderately large-framed calves*



2.

*2-Round and bunched-muscled steer*



3.

*3- A narrow, light-muscled steer*

It is difficult to know how much you should pay for a calf. Many 4-H members have jeopardized their possibilities of making a profit by paying well above the market price for calves.

Experienced cattle feeders are very knowledgeable of the price they can afford to pay for a steer to feed. Cattle feeders have a good idea of the feed cost and what it costs to produce a pound of gain. Feeders also know about how many days an animal must be fed to reach the desired grade. They also have a fairly good estimate of the market price of the finished steers at the time steers are purchased. Perhaps, the market price of the finished steers are "locked in " by forward contracting at the time the steers are purchased.

There are two sources of profit in cattle feeding. These are the "feeding margin" and "price margin." The feeding margin is the difference between the cost per pound of gain and the market price. Price margin is the difference between the price paid for the steer and the price received when the steer is sold. You and your family need to follow the same procedure when you purchase a steer. Use Table 3 as a guide.

**For example**, if you select a 500-pound steer calf and pay 70 cents per pound, you will be paying \$350 for the steer. Assuming that the steer will need to be fed to 1,100 pounds to reach choice grade, your calf will need to gain 600 pounds. At a cost of 40 cents per pound of gain, this will total \$240. Your total expense for both the steer at the time of show and sale would be \$590. If you sell a 1,100-pound steer at 65 cents per pound, the market value will be \$715. By subtracting the \$590 total expenses from the market value (\$715), your profit from this steer will be \$125. It is obvious, under the conditions outlined in Table 3, that you cannot afford to pay much more than 90 cents per pound or \$450 for a 500-pound calf and expect to make a profit. Also, remember that feed costs and expenses will vary. Yours may be less or more than what is illustrated in Table 3. You may be able to lower the total expenses by buying a calf from your parents, utilizing home grown feeds and buying a fast-growing calf that gains more weight per day than the average growing calf.

Table 3  
How Much Can You Pay for a Calf?

Cost	Price/Pound	Feed Costs etc.	Total Expenses	Market Value	Profit/Loss
300	0.60	\$240.00	\$540.00	\$715.00	+\$175.00
325	0.65	\$240.00	\$565.00	\$717.00	+\$150.00
350	0.70	\$240.00	\$590.00	\$715.00	+\$125.00
375	0.75	\$240.00	\$615.00	\$715.00	+\$100.00
400	0.80	\$240.00	\$640.00	\$715.00	+\$75.00
425	0.85	\$240.00	\$665.00	\$715.00	+\$50.00
450	0.90	\$240.00	\$690.00	\$715.00	+\$25.00
475	0.95	\$240.00	\$715.00	\$715.00	+\$0.00
500	1.00	\$240.00	\$740.00	\$715.00	-\$25.00