

4-H Market Steer Handbook:

Grooming

Trimming Feet

Trimming your steer's feet is an important part of show preparation. Your steer's feet will definitely need to be trimmed about four to six weeks before the show. Some calves may have excess hoof growth and require trimming three to four months before show time, and again one month before the show.

Steers should be placed on a foot trimming table or in a foot trimming chute so they can be properly restrained. Hoof nippers, a hoof rasp and a wood chisel will be needed. An electric disc sander may replace the nippers and rasp, but be careful! Foot trimming requires time and experience, so get your Extension agent and adult leaders to help. Some 4-H steer groups designate one day for hoof trimming when all members bring their steers to a central location. This allows the job to be done in one day, plus it keeps everyone's enthusiasm up about their steer project.

Washing

Good grooming requires frequent washing. You should wash your steer once a month until about two months before the show, then start washing once a week.

1. Brushing down with rice root brush to remove dust and dirt.
2. Wet calf all over.
3. Scrub with mild soap, using a scrub brush.
4. Rinse well with cold water.
5. Scrape excess water from hair with back of scotch.

6. Brush hair up with rice root brush.

7. Comb hair up with a scotch comb.

Before wetting the calf, be sure to brush it thoroughly to remove all dirt, manure and dandruff. Wet the steer and scrub with soap, a rice root brush and plenty of elbow grease. After a thorough job of washing, rinse completely. Be sure to do an extra good job of rinsing, because soap left on the steer is the main cause of dandruff. Often a repeat washing and rinsing is needed to get the steer completely clean. A final rinsing of one capful of milk oil dip (coal tar) in a bucket of water will make the hair work better and help control flies.

Hair Care

Before any clipping can be done on the steer, his hair coat must be thoroughly cleaned and trained to stand up. Proper hair care should begin as soon as you get your steer haltered.

When the steer is gentle enough to handle and brush, rinse all over with clean, fresh water. Be careful not to get water in the animal's ears. Rake the excess water from his hair with the back of a Scotch comb. First, brush the hair up. Using the Scotch comb, pull the steer's hair up all over, including his legs. It is extremely important to train the leg hair to stand up. If corrective clipping needs to be done on the legs, there will be hair to work with. If you have an electric blower, blow your calf until he is almost dry. Always blow the hair up. If you do not have a blower, brush him dry. It will not hurt to leave the calf damp if the temperature is about 40 F, but never leave the steer wet in colder weather.

Daily rinsing and lots of brushing are essential to healthy, well-trained hair. When the steer's hair is cleaned and trained to stand up, you are ready to begin clipping.