**What Do I Need To Know About The Beef Cattle Project**

So you want to raise a calf as a project. The first question you have to ask yourself is what kind of calf do I want to raise, where do I find one, how much and what type of feed do I get and most importantly how much is this going to cost.

**A Market Steer:**

The tag-in date for the 2015 fair is September 9th from 4 to 7 pm. You will need a photograph of you and the steer together, one of you parents with you because there is paper work that you both must sign. As far as the cost goes, usually they will start at about $1500-$2000 and go up from there. Remember you get what you pay for and this is a competition. How do I find one? Most steers are purchase in the spring for the following year. If you are looking for one please get with me and I will help you find a calf. The feeding program besides the purchasing of a quality calf is one of the most important parts of the program. Most commercial feeds are quite good what you are looking for is a feed that is about 12% in protein. First you would start with a grower type of feed, then, move to a finisher. There are times when you may have a combination of both, along with adding feed additives or extra grain. The average cost is about $10 per bag. Remember that there will come a point in the feeding program where is will be going through a bag every 1 ½ to 2 days. You will also need to be feeding at least a block of good quality hay every day. Every calf is different so feeding programs will need to be adjusted to the animal. A good worming program is essential. You should paste worming your calf at least every 30 days. Most of all you will need to spend time with your calf. I recommend at least an hour per day. During that time you would be grooming and practicing showmanship with your calf. The more time you spend the better off you are down the road.

**Breeding Heifers:**

Unlike the steers breeding heifer are not sold. They are kept to get your own herd started. Breeding heifers are usually registered with a breed association. The type of heifer you pick is generally done on your personal preference. Once again the cost varies with different breeds but you will probably start at $1500 and go up from there. Age is very important when picking a heifer. I personally like to have my students get a heifer that they will be able to show for two years to get the maximum use out of their time and money. What can I do with this heifer? Well most of the time you would be exhibiting your heifer at the major livestock shows such as Houston, San Antonio and Ft. Worth. Like I said, this program is designed for you to start your own purebred herd. The feeding program is similar to the market steer; except you will be feed more of a grower type of feed with some finisher mixed in. Like the steer program you will be feeding hay and will need a good worming program. Once again, like the steer program you are going to be spending at least a hour per day with them. There is also a heifer validation now. This is where you bring your heifer to have DNA taken (which is the pulling of some hair), brands and tattoos record and scanning of original papers in the child’s name. If you plan on showing at any of the majors such as Houston, San Antonio, etc. You must have this done.

**The Replacement Heifer Program:**

A Replacement Heifer is basically a heifer that is raised and shown at the Montgomery County Fair and is sold to go into someone’s pasture to become a replacement in a ranchers breeding herd. Some of the heifers are eligible to show at the major shows depending on the breed you are purchasing. Many of these heifers are sold to students at market price or if it is a registered calf it could be more. Your requirements for this program includes; you keeping a recordbook on them, a interview before a panel who will be asking a variety of questions and then you will show the calf during the replacement heifer show. A point system is in effect for this show. So many points for the recordbook, so many points for the interview and so many points for the show. A tally will be made on the points and a Grand Champion is selected all heifers. Workshops are available for help with recordbooks and interviews .The age of the heifer is very important. She must be born between July 1 and March 31. An example would be July 1 2013 and March 31 2014. At the time of tag-in which will be in October you will need to have the calf dehorned and have their calf hood vaccinations. You will also need to have a written statement from the breeder on their birthdate. Like the two other projects above you will be spend at least an hour per day with your calf. The feeding and worming program is similar to the steer and registered heifer programs.

Feeding Program:

As I stated before each animal is different and may require a different feeding program. A simple rule to remember when feeding a calf is 3% of his body weight to gain, 2% to maintain and 1% to lose weight. So you can see weighing your calf every month is very important. As stated before most commercial feeds today are good. The brand of feed you feed is a personal preference. Sometimes though you may have to switch a feed due to the fact the calf won’t eat that particular brand.

Worming: Your calf should be wormed every 30 days Most any of the commercial worming paste do a good job.

Pen Size: Your pen should be at least 12ft x 12ft. with an area where they can get under cover and out of the weather. The pen can be filled with shaving which will help keep the calf clean. Just remember to keep the pen clean from manure everyday.

Washing and Rinsing: You rinse your calf everyday. This helps to keep the hair clean, cools the animal, and promotes new hair growth. As far as washing your calf; they should be washed with soap once a week. A mild type of soap should be used such as dawn detergent. When washing with soap the key factor to remember is to rinse the calf thoroughly. Soap left in the hair will can develop dandruff.

Equipment: Besides the calf; this is the most expensive part of the project. You will need a grooming chute (prices vary), blower ($350), fans($275 ea.), combs, and various others supplies. If you calf is in the Agriculture Facilities Barn here at the school many of these things are provided for you.

This is just a brief overview of a beef cattle project program. As you get involved with the program you will find that each calf is different and you will have to tailor your program to that particular calf. Every month we will be having beef cattle workshop at the Ag. Barn. This will give you the opportunity to get your calf weighed, work on showmanship in the arena or just get some advice. Remember we are here to help you. So, if you are interest please contact me at bstrader@misd.org.