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Forrest Rose

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# The Preparation and Handling of Dairy Cattle for Shows

By FORREST ROSE

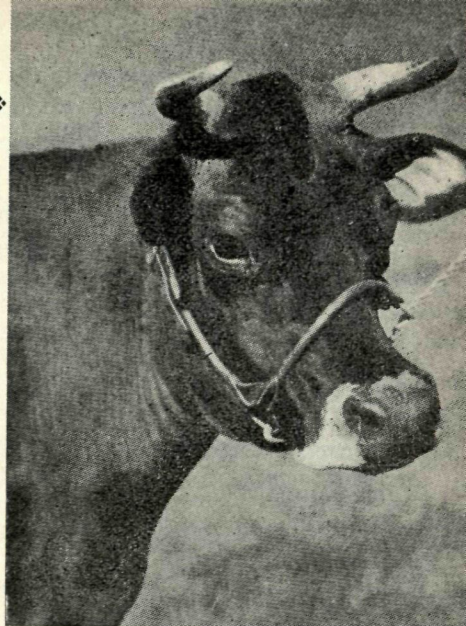


Fig. 1.—“If the animal has a good head, make sure that the judge can see it”

**S**UCCESS in the show ring is not easy to achieve. The blue ribbons do not always go to the animals which the owner knows to be good, and a little thought will show us why. In the first place, the owner's opinion of a beast is formed over a long period, probably since the animal was born. He knows all about its disposition and its performance on the home farm; how delightful it looked last spring and so forth. The judge who allots the prizes does so on opinions formed during the brief period that the animals are under his scrutiny in the judging ring.

The actions and appearance of an animal during that period may or may not be typical of its normal appearance and behaviour, but the judge is not clairvoyant and can only judge on what he sees at the time.

Obviously, it is up to the owner to educate and prepare the animals so that they can be depended upon to behave well and look well when they are under the judge's eye in the ring. Education is important, for without it many months of preparation can be wasted.

An early education is indicated and the procedure I have always adopted is to stable all calves for about three weeks when they are taken from the calf paddock to be weaned at the age of about seven months.

During the stabling period, each calf is haltered and tied up securely in a stall. It is led out for exercise each day and taught to lead properly. The aim at this

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stage of training is to teach the calf to step out freely and confidently, carrying its head well and generally looking as if it is enjoying itself.

Each time the calf is halted it should be taught to stand with its head up and all four legs planted squarely. A light



touch of a cane, or even of the trainer's boot, to any badly-placed foot will soon teach the calf to alter its stance, and it is surprising how quickly it will learn the lesson and stand well without prompting.

The trainer must have the full confidence of his pupil. This requires patience and kindness. Never attempt to hurry the training, and if you find yourself becoming irritable or impatient it is better to postpone the lesson until you are in a better mood.

I have often been asked, "Why do you go to the trouble of educating **all** the stud calves when you will only be showing the best? Why not pick out the best and concentrate on them?"

My answer to that is that once a calf is educated at an early age, it will remember the training throughout its life. From my own experience, I know that a rather plain-looking calf can often develop into a first-class show animal and, if it has not been educated as a youngster, it will be difficult to train later in life. I once tried to educate a mature cow for the show-ring but the task proved hopeless and the cow was never shown.

A well-educated animal will enjoy being paraded round the judging ring. It will have confidence in its attendant and will have no fear of crowds or noises so long as he is by its side.

Compare this with some of the animals one sees being dragged round the ring, afraid of the leader, the crowds and everything else.

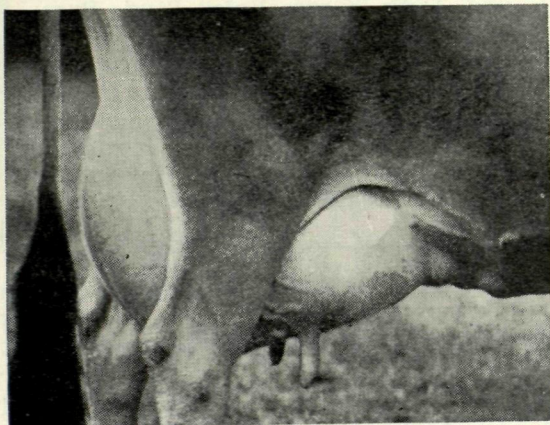


Fig. 2.—An excellent mature Jersey udder

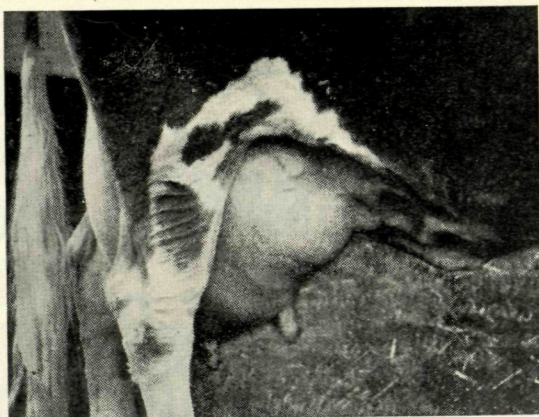


Fig. 3.—A poorly-attached and pendulous udder

## FEEDING

Dairy cattle for showing should be well-fed to give them bloom, but should not be over-conditioned—this applies particularly to bulls and dry stock. One of the best, cheapest, and most readily available foods to put bloom on a bull or a yearling heifer is separated milk given with a ration of concentrates, chaff and hay and grazing.

The quantity of separated milk to feed will depend on the condition of the animal when you commence to prepare it for the show—which should be at least eight weeks before the event.

**DON'T** make the mistake of changing to whole milk at the show—it will only upset the animal's digestion. It would be better to give a cup of whole milk in a gallon of water.

It is a good plan to feed your cattle—for a few days prior to leaving for the show—on a ration which is as near as possible to that which they will receive while at the showground. They will travel better on hard feed, and settle down more readily.

The secret of successful feeding is to feed little and often—and **never to put fresh feed on top of old.**

If you want to save on feed bills, keep the feed-boxes filled. You'll save on feed costs but your cattle will suffer. I have seen cattle leave their stalls after a week at the showground with their feed-boxes full of mouldy chaff. No wonder some herdsmen complain that their cows are nearly dry by the end of the show.



A point worth remembering, incidentally, is that cattle will always drink better at night when the showground is reasonably quiet.

### CLIPPING AND RUGGING

The bodies and legs of the cattle should be clipped about six weeks prior to the show, and the animals rugged with heavy rugs which should only be removed on warm days. I refer, of course, to preparation for a spring show. Heads, necks and tails may be clipped within a week of the show.

The early clipping of the bodies is advisable because, when newly-clipped, an attractive bronze or golden colour can appear drab and mousy. The original colour returns about four to six weeks after clipping.

If you have no factory-made rugs, six cornsacks sewn together will make a serviceable substitute.

The invention of the rubber currycomb has reduced the time spent on grooming, but it is still necessary to finish this important task with a soft hair brush.

### HORNS

Every breeder should have in his mind's eye, the ideal shape that the horns should be. Some preliminary training and a certain amount of shaping with a rasp will bring them close to the ideal. Care must be taken not to rasp off too much horn and thus cause bleeding. Horns should usually be tipped, so that the points are blunted sufficiently to lessen the risk of injuries to other animals—or the clothes and person of the herdsman if the animal is in playful mood.

Once the horns are shaped and deep scratches removed with the rasp, use coarse carborundum tape, glass, or a scraper. Follow this with fine carborundum tape, bath-cleaning paste or cement and a wet chamois leather to further smooth the surface. Finish with a light polishing oil prior to judging.

To protect polished horns, sew two pieces of bagging over them and draw the coverings together by a few stitches between the horns, using a sack needle.

### WASHING

It is a good plan to wash the cattle all over before leaving for the show—the weather may be unfavourable on arrival at the showground. A good practice is to take the animals to the wash-stand each morning before breakfast and after milking. Sponge the heads and eyes and clean the ears, hooves and hindquarters.

Tails should be washed and combed out then plaited tightly while wet at least 12 hours before judging. They should be combed out when perfectly dry. Flour bags are handy for covering tails once they have been plaited.

### BEDDING

Keeping your animals well bedded down adds to their comfort and contentment. By working the soiled straw to the bottom of the animal's bed and adding fresh straw to the top, a deep firm bed can be made which, apart from the saving in straw has the effect of elevating the cattle and enhancing their appearance in the stalls.

### RINGCRAFT

I consider this an important phase of showing stock. Having prepared and educated your animals to the best of your ability, see that you yourself and the other attendants are equally well turned out, clean, neatly dressed and white-coated.

The headstalls on the animals should be clean, neat and well-fitting. Decide on a certain pattern of headstall and have them all made to the same pattern but in sizes to fit different animals. Halter-ropes should be clean and white.

Always make an early start on judging mornings and have your cattle ready to enter the ring on time.

From the time you enter the ring until you leave it, remember that your job is to display the animal you are leading to the best of your ability. There are only two things to concentrate on—the judge's eye and the animal you are leading.

This is not the time to exchange greetings with an old friend outside the ring—even if you haven't seen him for years. There will be plenty of time for a yarn later.



Don't try to do the judge's job for him, but always keep your eye on him and be ready to impress him with your animal's good points.

For instance, if your beast has a particularly attractive head, have it inclined towards the judge so that every time he looks your way he can be sure of seeing it.

Never give up trying until the ribbons are put on, whether you are at the top of the line or down at the bottom.

In conclusion, don't relax after judging. A good herdsman should have his cattle looking just as well on the last day of the show as they looked on the first day.



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