

## Why Show Youth Livestock?

Georgia 4-H uses all kinds of projects to accomplish our main objective - positive youth development! Livestock projects are special because young people learn what it truly means to care for and be responsible for another living being. Youth learn time management, budgeting, record keeping skills and many animal husbandry skills. They also learn about the livestock industry and its role in the larger agricultural economy.

Georgia 4-H believes there are four essential elements to positive youth development: Mastery, Generosity, Belonging and Independence. The 4-H Livestock Program fosters all four elements. Attend a livestock show and you cannot miss the sense of community. Maybe no other 4-H program demonstrates a sense of belonging like the livestock program. Youth build mastery as they practice and compete. Getting up early to feed and care for animals builds a "can do" attitude important for independence. How does one rightly describe generosity? The livestock shows again offer fine examples - adults sharing what they know with youth with no thought to the competitive nature of the event, youth sharing supplies...generosity is everywhere.

We are excited that you are interested in joining this dynamic part of Georgia 4-H! This fact sheet is a start-up document. You will find county agents, UGA Specialists and friends of agriculture everywhere willing to help you take next steps.

## The Basics of Raising a Commercial Dairy Heifer

### Cost of Showing a Commercial Dairy Heifer

**Purchase of Commercial Dairy Heifer:** Animals in the Commercial Dairy Heifer Project are traditionally leased from local producers. Visit with your local agent for identification of local producers willing to participate in a leasing program. All agreements regarding leasing should be made between the youth member/parent and producer. Following this, agents MUST be made aware of the agreement.

**Feed:** Depending on your leasing agreement, feed (concentrate) may be provided by the producer. Hay and forage supplementation is generally the responsibility of the youth member. If no feed is provided, it is recommended to consult with the dairyman or county agent for feed resources and requirements.

The highest cost would be associated with raising calves on the bottle (milk replacer) for any period of time.

90-120 days of animals in hand with an approximate cost per day of \$1-2, the average youth exhibitor would look at a cost ranging from \$90-\$240 in total feed costs for the duration of the project.

**Equipment:** Many county extension offices have group supplies that provide items such as chutes, clippers, blowers, etc. that are used by the show team. Primary expenses to the youth member would be: show attire, animal halter, feed and water buckets, as well as some disposable items needed for preparing animals for show.

Be aware that commercial dairy heifers will have to be trailered to shows. Many counties can provide coordinated group transportation.

## Facilities

Commercial dairy heifers must be contained within some fencing or paneling that is appropriate for their size.

Animals must be provided with shelter from environmental extremes. Shelter structures should provide adequate shading as well as protection from excessive wind, rain, and cold temperatures.

## Health

The two most common health issues encountered with dairy heifers are scours and respiratory disease. These health issues can result in reduced performance and death of dairy calves and should be addressed immediately. Working with your county agent or producer can help you determine the severity of the health issue and if veterinarian attention is required.

In addition to monitoring the above named health related issues, heifers should have appropriate parasite and vaccination programs. You will work with the producer or your county agent to establish these programs.

## Feeding

Heifers should be fed to achieve an intake of approximately 2.2-3% of their bodyweight in dry matter daily. As heifers grow, their dry matter intake as a percentage of their body weight decreases.

Feeding management can be properly assessed through regular measurements of growth parameters (hip height and weight) and Body Condition Scoring (BCS).

Average daily gain could range between 1.3 (small breeds) to 1.8 (large breeds).

**Additional Opportunities** – Dairy Judging Contest, Dairy Quiz Bowl, Commercial Dairy Heifer Record Book Contest, Georgia Junior National Livestock Show, Georgia National Fair Junior Invitational, District Project Achievement

- Refer to the Georgia Junior National Livestock Show Rulebook and always read show rules for any exhibition you are preparing to attend!
- Complete and mail entries with payment, and be sure your forms are signed by your county agent!
- Complete Code of Conduct and Medical Info & Release Forms and turn them in to your county agent for the Georgia Junior National Livestock Show!

**Additional Resources** – The following links can be accessed and utilized for more information regarding shows, contests, clinics, care for your project, scholarship opportunities and more!

Georgia 4-H Livestock Program's Commercial Dairy Heifer Web Page: <http://georgia4h.org/livestock/dairy/default.htm>

Is Your Heifer Fit to Show? A Guide to Fitting and Showing Dairy Animals - UGA:

<http://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.cfm?number=B1427>

Showing Ready: A Beginners Guide to Showing Dairy Animals – Holstein Foundation, Inc.: <http://dodge.uwex.edu/files/2015/02/Showing-Ready.pdf>

Heifer Economics – Penn State Extension: <http://extension.psu.edu/animals/dairy/nutrition/heifers/economics/heifer-economics>

Georgia 4-H & FFA State Livestock Show Rulebook: <http://georgia4h.org/livestock/GaJrLivestockShow/default.htm>

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