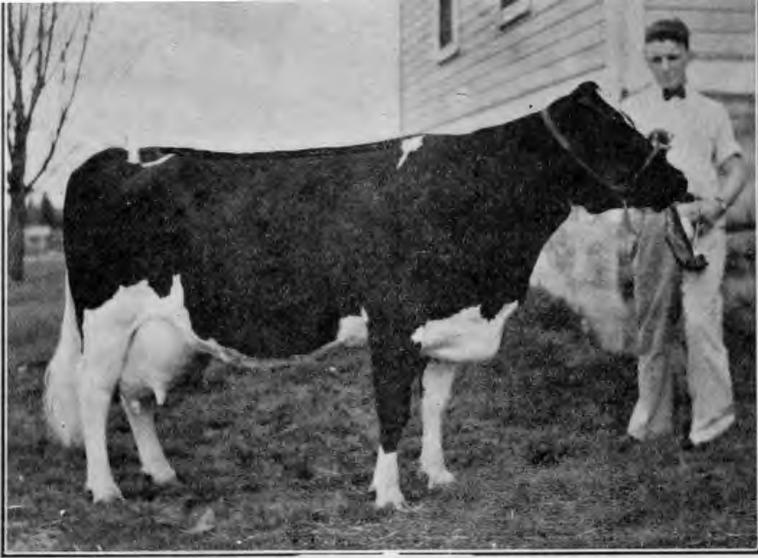
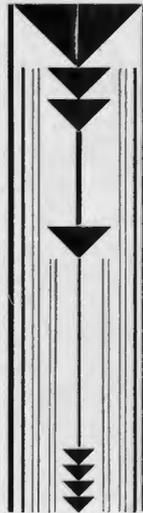


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# Fitting and Showing Dairy Cattle



**Extension Service**  
**The State College of Washington**  
**PULLMAN, WASHINGTON**

# **FITTING AND SHOWING DAIRY CATTLE**

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By

**Otto J. Hill, Extension Dairyman, and  
J. C. Knott, Assistant Professor of Dairy Production**

The primary object of the cattle show is to encourage the breeding and feeding of the best types of livestock. Showing offers an excellent opportunity to study breed type and learn more about better cattle from the judge's criticisms and commendation of the cattle. The exhibitor should make a careful study of the true type for the breed so that the best animals will be selected for showing.

## **SELECTION**

Animals selected should at least be typical of the breed to which they belong. True type pictures for the breed are aids in selecting the best animal to show. No amount of work or feed will develop an inferior animal into a show winner. Often time is practically wasted in fitting inferior animals. Likewise improper fitting may keep good animals from winning.

When the animal is first stabled for fitting, it may have long, rough, uneven hair and a hard skin. A month or six weeks is required to properly prepare such an animal for exhibition. When correct methods are followed, a good job can be done with less effort.

## **QUARTERS**

If possible, show cattle should be housed in a barn; box stalls are preferable when available. The barn should be clean, well bedded and dark. This will aid in keeping out flies. If windows are removed and burlap bags nailed over the openings they will darken the stall and permit sufficient air to get through to provide satisfactory ventilation.

## **FEEDING**

The animals should be fed a ration during the fitting period similar to the one to be fed at the show. Changing the formula may throw the animal off feed. Plenty of good legume hay and soaked beet pulp when available are excellent roughages. There are many satisfactory grain mixtures that can be used. In the past, rations often contained a high proportion of corn or other fattening

feeds. More recently there has been a tendency to discriminate against over-fattened dairy cattle by the breed associations and judges. The following ration is suggested, since it contains less fattening material:

Millrun or bran.....	70 pounds
Ground Oats.....	70 pounds
Ground Barley.....	30 pounds
Linseed Oil Meal.....	30 pounds

Many other rations would likely be equally satisfactory.

### EQUIPMENT

There are numerous pieces of equipment that can be used for properly fitting animals. Necessary equipment follows:

Blanket, halter, soft brush, currycomb, hoof nippers, rasp, emery paper, bucket, and soap. This equipment is shown in Figure 1.

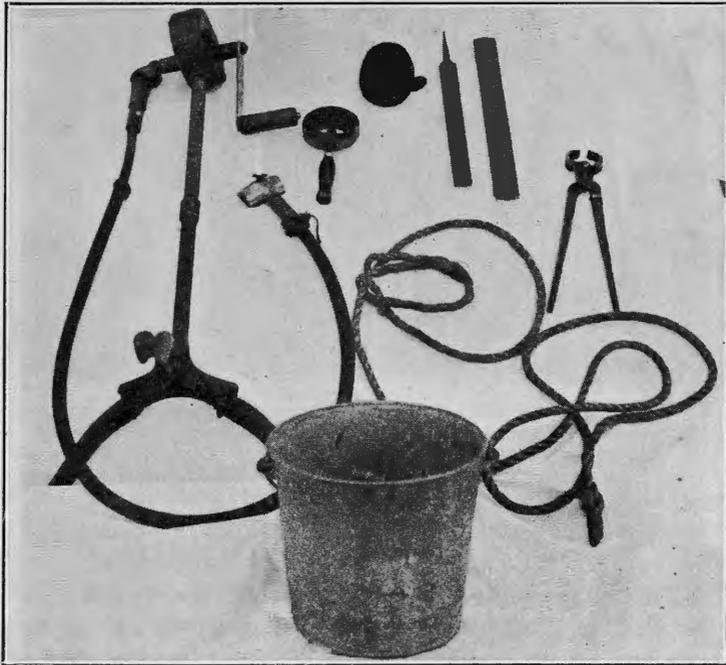


Figure 1. Fitting equipment.

## BLANKETING

It is a good plan to wash the animals and blanket them as soon as they are put in the fitting quarters. Blanketing makes the hide soft and pliable, aids in forcing shedding of long hair and causes it to lie more smoothly. After blanketing is started, it should be continued until the show is over. Blankets made of burlap bags as shown in Figure 2 are cheap and satisfactory.

If an animal's hair is long and the hide is tough, it may be desirable to place an old woolen blanket under the burlap blanket. The woolen blanket will hasten shedding and softening of the hide. During extremely hot weather, it may be advisable to remove the woolen blanket during the day and replace it at night.

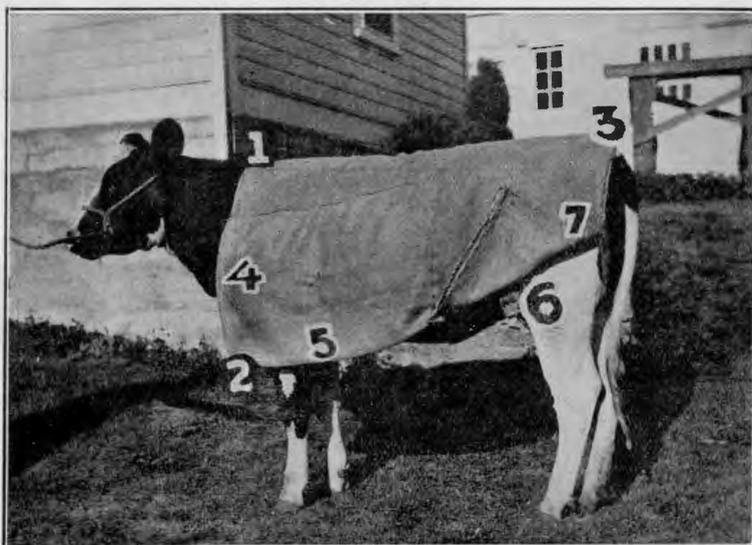


Figure 2. Blanketing. The blanket should be made so that the front edge will cover the wither and lower point of the shoulder (1 and 2). The back edge should come to the tail setting (3). The straps should be fastened at points 4, 5, 6, and 7. Strap 5 should be attached about 6 or 8 inches from the lower edge on each side. In order to prevent tearing out, a 6-inch square of denim may be sewed on at each point where the straps are attached.

## GROOMING

Brushing once daily will make the hair glossy and the hide loose and pliable. Currycombs should be used only on the legs and flanks; otherwise, more harm will be done than good. At first, a stiff brush can be used to remove most of the dirt but later a softer

brush should be used. Brushes with stiff bristles will toughen the hide rather than soften it. A piece of rubber, such as a rubber heel, can be used in place of a brush to remove loose hair. The rubber will also massage the skin and improve the pliability as shown in Figure 3. Massaging with the hands is also good for improving the quality of the hide.

Daily grooming will remove loose hair and leave the coat smooth. After brushing, the animal should be gone over with a flannel cloth moistened with oil. Olive oil, or any vegetable oil, is commonly used and also most desirable.

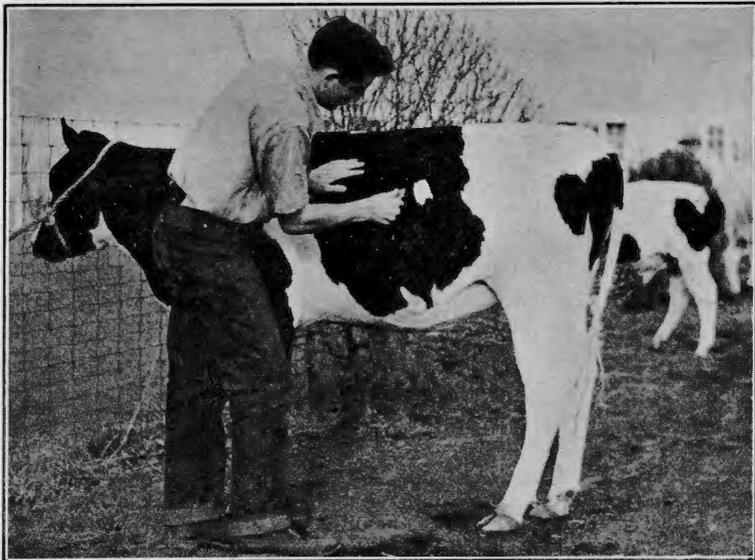


Figure 3. Grooming.

### WASHING

Showmen frequently wash the animals when fitting is started. A warm day should be selected and lukewarm water should be used. Ivory or tar soap are commonly used. When washing the first time, a thorough job should be done. Frequent washing is undesirable, since it removes the natural skin secretions and leaves it dry and harsh. Stains should be washed out each day. When the switch is white it should be washed and thoroughly bleached.

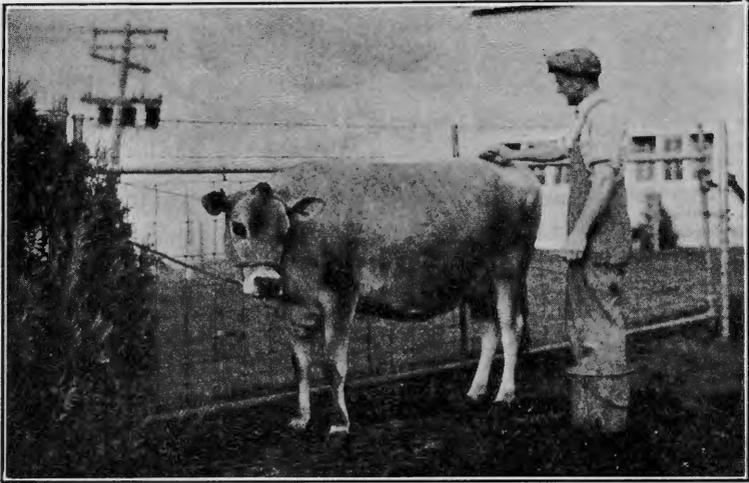


Figure 4. Washing.

## CLIPPING

In no case should the entire animal be clipped. The best practice is to clip the head, tail and usually the belly. (Figure 5). In the case of cows the belly should be clipped to show the milk veins. (Figure 5, lower left). In young heifers, clipping the belly may give them the appearance of lacking depth of body.

The entire head should be clipped. It is best to begin at the nose and clip two lines to the eyes, clipping out between them and widening out to take in the entire head. The neck should be clipped to the withers and down to the point of the shoulder as shown in Figure 5 (lower right). Care must be taken to leave a little ridge of hair on top of the neck at the junction of the shoulder and the neck, for when the hair is clipped too close, the neck may look low just in front of the withers, giving a "ewe neck" appearance.

The tail should be clipped from a point just above the switch to the rump. (Figure 5, upper left). Enough hair should be left on the tail setting to give the rump the appearance of being long and level. (Tail after clipping, Figure 5, upper right). Unless the hair is blended off carefully at the tail setting the animal may appear to have a sloping rump. Care should be taken to do a neat job of trim-

ming just above the switch. Clipping the udder of cows or springing heifers is a desirable practice. Animals show off to best advantage when clipped not more than three or four days before showing.

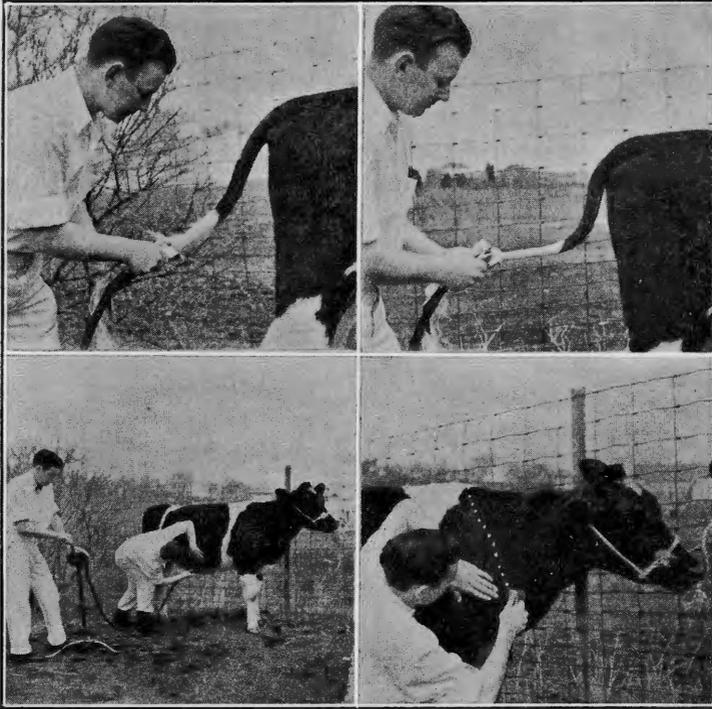


Figure 5. Clipping.

## TRAINING

One of the most serious faults encountered in the show ring by judges is improperly trained animals. The animal should be led from the left side. Cattle must be trained to pose and lead properly if they are to be shown to best advantage. A satisfactory rope halter can be made according to instructions in State College of Washington Extension Circular 36 "How to Make a Rope Halter." Animals that are unruly may be placed down in their class because the judges failed to see them shown at their best. The animal should respond to a light halter tug rather than being literally pulled around.

They should be taught to stand with their legs squarely under them, with head erect, top line straight, and to lead off or stop at the leader's command. (Figure 6). The showman must learn to pose his animals to best advantage. Many showmen allow their animals to go to sleep. Usually when the pose is broken the animal is allowed to stretch or get out of balance. The animal should be trained so that it will pose properly when spoken to or lightly touched with hand or foot. Frequently animals refuse to lead at first; patience will aid a great deal in starting the animal off properly. When they refuse to lead it may help to take along for the first few times another animal that leads well. Spending a great deal of time while the animals are still at home will help greatly in the show ring.



Figure 6. Showing.

### CARE OF THE HORNS

A smoothly polished pair of horns improves the appearance of an animal. The roughest parts can be smoothed down with a fine wood file. After filing the surface can be further improved with a wood scraper, piece of glass or a section of a piston ring. Care

should be taken not to work off too much of the horn since it may weaken the horn so that the shell may be easily knocked off.

Fine emery paper will further smooth the surface. Final polishing may be done with powdered pumice stone, metal polish or silver polish. These materials should be applied to the horn as an oil paste and polished with a flannel cloth.

### CARE OF THE FEET

Animals that have been inside a great deal or on soft dirt may need proper trimming of the hoofs. They cannot show to good advantage unless the feet are properly trimmed. The toes should be trimmed back so that the animal can stand easily and in the proper pose. A hoof nipper (Fig. 1) and rasp are necessary for this job. The hoof should be cleaned and smoothed similarly to the horns. If they are not carefully fitted a light application of oil will help improve the appearance.

### PREPARING ANIMALS TO SHOW

#### Braiding Tails

After the switch is carefully washed out it should be braided while wet into four or five different braids of three strands each the night before showing. (Figure 7). These braids are tied with strings and not combed out until just before entering the show ring. The front piece cut shows a carefully fitted tail.

#### Final Preparations

The animal should be given a liberal feed of hay and beet pulp along with the grain on the morning of the show. This will help develop the middle. Just before going into the ring the animal should be given a drink of water. A cold drink may cause the animal to "hump up" and the hair to stand on end. Too much fill is very undesirable, since it produces "pot bellies;" therefore, discretion should be used in the amount of drink given.

Just before entering the ring the animal should be given a final finish with a soft brush and a sparsely oiled flannel cloth. **Too much oil is very undesirable.** A small amount of oil gives the desired gloss and makes the hair lie smoothly. After the oiled cloth has been used rubbing down with the hands will further improve appearance. Figure 6 and the cover page show an excellent finish.

## SHOWING IN THE RING

The animal should be ready so when the class is called, prompt entrance can be made. It is best to keep the animal moving slowly until asked to line up. A good policy to follow is to keep one eye on the animal and one on the judge. Unless the animal is shown carefully during the entire judging period, the judge may find the

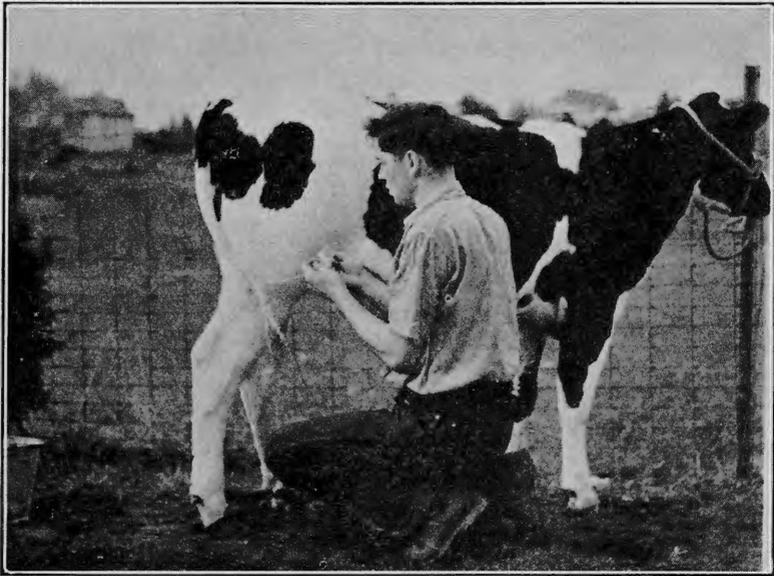


Figure 7. Braiding tail.

animal in an awkward pose which will cause a loss in relative position. When the animal steps out of pose, it is best to lead the animal out in a large circle coming back into position rather than trying to make the animal back up. The showman should always stand in a position so that the animal will not be obscured from the judge. It is a very bad practice to jerk the animal around at any time. Slow movement and patience are essential. Frequently showmen lose out because they become interested in the spectators or talk to other exhibitors rather than paying strict attention to their animals.

A good showman must be a good sportsman. Those who lose hard cannot develop into better showmen next year. Those who see their faults and learn from mistakes will improve for the next show.

The following score card shows the relative emphasis placed on the various points for fitting and showing dairy cattle.

**FITTING and SHOWMANSHIP SCORE CARD for DAIRY**

A. Fitting	Points
1. Condition of animal .....	25
a. Animal in good flesh .....	10
b. Hair smooth, soft and glossy .....	10
c. Hide soft and pliable .....	5
2. Cleanliness .....	10
a. Freedom from stains.....	4
b. Hair clean .....	4
c. Ears clean .....	2
3. Clipping .....	10
a. Smoothness of clipping .....	5
b. Proper margins .....	5
4. Condition of horns and hoofs .....	5
(Dehorned animals not scored down)	
 <b>B. Showing</b>	
1. Training of animal .....	20
a. Animal leads well.....	10
b. Ease of posing.....	10
2. Handling.....	15
a. Leading slowly.....	4
b. Making long turns .....	4
c. Keeping animal posed without obvious maneuvers .....	4
d. Freedom from excessive stretching.....	3
3. Contestant .....	15
a. Dressed in white .....	3
b. Continuous attention to animal .....	3
c. Keeping animal properly posed .....	3
d. Obeying orders from judge .....	3
e. Ease of showmanship and freedom from nervousness .....	3

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