Youth Beef Projects

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What am I looking for?
Where do I start?
What factors should be taken into consideration?
Factors to Consider:

1. Breed
2. Steer or heifer
3. Price
4. Private treaty or auction
5. Quality and disposition of the animal.
What breeds do you have access to? How competitive do you want to be? How much experience do you have feeding, clipping, fitting and showing or do you have a teacher, agent, or breeder to assist you?
Steer or Heifer

- If you select a heifer as your project, do you have access to a AI Tech or a quality bull? Do you have access to a pasture for your heifer when she returns to the “real world?”
- If you select a steer, make sure you have a market or outlet for him when the shows are over.
What do I pay? Remember that purchasing show cattle is a lot like buying a new car, the more options they have on them the more they cost. Set a limit for yourself before you begin your search and remember, price has nothing to do with where you will place in the show.
Make every attempt possible to establish a relationship with a reputable breeder. Well established producers will be there to assist you with any problem that might occur. Also, working with a breeder gives you the opportunity to visit the calf crop several times between calving and the sale date.

Be careful of cattle that have been assembled from different parts of the country which means their health and genetics could be questionable.
Disposition

This is probably the most overlooked trait of show cattle. If the exhibitor is afraid of the animal or if the steer or heifer refuses to cooperate while on the halter, the judge will never be able to fairly evaluate them.
Very few judges will evaluate cattle the same way. Some will put more emphasis on structural correctness while others will favor capacity, muscle volume, or eye appeal. The best rule of thumb is to avoid any extremes. But, the question you need an answer to is what will the judge be looking for?
Traits To Select For:

1. Structural Soundness both front and rear
2. Muscle Volume
3. Volume and rib shape
4. Growth potential and mature size
5. Femininity in heifers
Structural Soundness

Structurally Correct

Cow- Hocked

Bowlegged
What traits are important?

- **Muscle**
  - Sell meat!

- **Fat**
  - Want a lean product!

- **Volume/capacity**
  - Feed Efficiency
  - Production Capabilities

- **Structural Design**
  - Economic
  - Aesthetic “Looks Good”
The First Step!

- Hip Bone (Hooks)
- Neck
- Brisket
- Shoulder
- Forearm
- Cannon Bone
- Knee
- Flank
- Round (Quarter)
- Side (Ribs)
- Hock
- Rear
- Stifle
- Pastern
- Tailhead
- Pin Bone
- Rump
- Loin
- Back
- Neck
- Poll
Evaluating Muscle!

- LOIN (TOP)
- ROUND
- STIFLE
- FOREARM
- WIDTH OF BASE
Evaluating Fat!

- **TAILHEAD**
- **LOIN (TOP)**
- **RIBS**
- **BRISKET**
- **FLANK**
- **WIDTH OF BASE**

COD (steers)
UDDER (heifers)
Evaluating Volume!

- **Length of Body**
- **Depth of Body**
- **Rib Shape**
- **Width of Base**
Evaluating Structure!
High Yielding (High cutability)

Low Yielding (Low cutability)
Straight and turns out
Correct Shoulder Structure
A Train Wreck Waiting to Happen
Round, Coarse Muscle Shape
Square Hipped, Flatter Muscle
Volume and Rib
Just the opposite
Front Ends
Avoid the extremes
## The optimal steer...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Live weight (pounds)</td>
<td>900-1400</td>
<td>1200-1275</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dressing percent</td>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>62-63</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fat Thickness (inches)</td>
<td>0.15-0.80</td>
<td>0.25-0.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ribeye area (inches²)</td>
<td>12.0-17.0</td>
<td>14.0-16.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yield Grade</td>
<td>&lt; 3.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Grade</td>
<td>Select or &gt;</td>
<td>Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feed conversion (lbs feed per lb of gain)</td>
<td>5-8</td>
<td>&lt; 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finding your animal...
What you need to know prior to purchasing your animal…

- When you need to purchase your animal, relative to your fair date
- What the animal needs to weigh at the beginning of the project
- What is a fair price for the animal
Other factors to consider...

- Purchase from a reputable producer
  - You are making an investment
  - Ask around!
Other factors to consider...

- Determine a fair market price
  - Prices vary!
  - Find a good calf at a reasonable price
  - Today’s market a 750 lb calf would cost ~ $1.12/lb or $840 dollars!
Other factors to consider...

- Calf’s disposition
  - Wild or nervous cattle don’t gain well
  - Lower eating quality of the carcass
    - IT’S TOUGH!!! (steers)
  - Safety