

Fitting

The difference between looking good and looking great!

by Wendy Gauld, Santa Ynez, Calif.

Fitting helps to view an animal for all its good points as well as its imperfections that can be corrected...

Practice, patience and an open-minded attitude are necessary to stay abreast of new fitting techniques.

How cattle preparation is one of the most motivating segments of the cattle industry for many young people. The process of caring for and preparing an animal for the show ring is certainly a method of motivating a young person to be competitive and to strive for creative perfection. It is an excellent way to learn about animal behavior and about animal anatomy. Fitting helps to view an animal for all its good points as well as its imperfections that can be corrected or overshadowed by applying some specific fitting techniques.

Fitting really can change an animal's appearance. Since all animals have different fitting needs, all are not prepared the same. Understanding basic conformation and then applying specific fitting practices makes a winner!

Today's show ring trend is toward large-framed, clean-made, eye-appealing cattle. Breeding cattle must display high volume, angularity, growthiness, muscle length and muscle volume, and a straight-lined, eye-appealing profile. Steers need to be clean, well balanced, expressively muscled and thick topped, and must exhibit efficiency.

There is no "right way" of fitting a beef animal. Current methods change as all styles do. It takes a great deal of time to become an accomplished fitter. Practice, patience and an open-minded attitude are necessary to stay abreast of new fitting techniques. Listening and watching others and a willingness to try new ideas will help you to become a better fitter.

New ideas can always be adapted for your specific needs. An accomplished fitter can present an animal to look very natural and eye appealing. The thoughts and ideas that are presented here are provided for you as a basic outline. Hopefully these tips will encourage you to adapt these ideas to techniques that will work for you.

Showing and fitting cattle can be fun and rewarding. Honesty and integrity play a big role in the show ring game. There are lots of unethical fitting methods, but it is important to show your cattle to the best of your ability by being creative and honest.

Going to shows gives you the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with some great people.

Remember to listen to others for ideas and then adapt what you have learned for your own needs.

Have fun...

Halter Breaking

- I. Minimize stress for all concerned.
- II. Properly adjusted equipment and consistent and quiet techniques make it easy.
 - A. Use a rope halter (preferably nylon, $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{5}{8}$ inch in diameter) with a long lead. Adjust and place nose piece high up on the face and close to the eyes. This will prevent slippage and gives maximum control with minimum injury to the animal.
 - B. Let the animal drag the halter for a few days prior to tying for the first time. The animal will learn to "give" to the pressure when it steps on the rope repeatedly.
 - C. Tie the animal first in a safe, confined area where it is easily caught and can be tied to a solid post. Snaring the rope with a show stick makes it easier.
 1. Tie at eye level and about 12 inches from the post; higher or lower can create undue pressure on the spine and hind legs, causing a potential spine or muscle injury.
 2. Tie for a short duration. Fifteen to 20 minutes the first few times is best. As soon as the animal "gives" to the halter or wears out, turn it loose. Release the calf calmly and don't let it jerk the rope from your hands. Creating a situation of early respect will be rewarded later.
 - D. Begin touching the animal as soon as possible.
 1. Use a show stick. It allows you to be further away and is less intimidating.
 2. Next, get your hands on the animal and your body as close as possible. Be firm. Very slow and deliberate movements are best. At this point, it is most important to be patient and calm.
 - E. When teaching to lead, a "pull, release and reward" method is best. Accept only a few steps as progress and reward by releasing the pressure on the halter and speaking to the animal. Voice reward is very important. And again, it's important to be patient and calm.
 - F. Take the animal to the wash rack as soon as it is controllable. Rinsing with water seems to take out the rest of the fight and prevent some later kicking problems.
- III. Following the initial halter breaking, always tie the animal's head up high to teach it to stand with its head up and its feet under it properly.
- IV. Halter breaking can be easily successful and fun if begun at an early age and you remember to be patient.

Nutrition

- I. Successful fitting depends on an animal's well-conditioned skin and haircoat. Nutrition plays an important role in the overall condition of the hair

and can be used to promote hair growth. Although every animal has different requirements for its age and show schedule, the following are always necessary:

- A. Adequate vitamin A, either supplemented or in the feed.
 - B. Routine worming.
 - C. Proper energy level for development stage and weather conditions. (High energy feeds and hot weather do not promote long hair growth.)
 - D. A balanced ration with minerals and amino acids, especially Cystine and Methionine.
- II. Feeding supplements high in fat and protein such as Calf Manna, linseed meal or milk replacer will promote hair growth and add gloss to the skin and hair.
 - III. Don't overlook nutrition if there are problems with hair growth.

Care of the Hair Coat

- I. A good hair coat is important to successful fitting. Many cattle are shown slick in the summer months, but hair care is important year-round.
- II. External parasite control is the first step to a healthy hair coat. Spraying or dipping for lice and grubs is very important. Be sure to find out what months are best to use the insecticides in your specific area. Improper use of any chemicals can result in temporary or permanent injury to the animal.
 - A. Watch carefully for ringworm. It is a stubborn problem of young animals. It begins as a round, scaly spot that will show hair loss. It spreads rapidly on the body, to other cattle and to people. Tips for treatment:
 1. Apply TBZ worming paste daily for five to seven days to a scratched open area and rub in thoroughly. Or,
 2. Make a thick paste of a 50 percent Captan solution found in an Ortho product called Orthocide. Apply like the worming paste. Or,
 3. Apply iodine like the worming paste. Or,
 4. Give fulvicin pills, one each day for three to five days.
 5. Application of lard after ringworm is inactive will bring the hair back.
 - B. Ringworm is mainly unsightly, but many shows don't allow animals with active ringworm.
- III. A healthy hair coat can only be obtained by the careful care of the skin and hair.

Washing the Hair

- I. Use a mild soap such as Orvis. Rinse thoroughly following each washing.
- II. Wash with soap only when it is really necessary. Undue use of soap creates dry skin and hair.
 - A. Wash prior to the first clipping at home.
 - B. Wash at the show upon arrival and after the show.

Washing too often removes the natural hair oil necessary for shine and manageability of the hair coat.

- A. Always replace the oils with a balsam or oil product after washing. The hair will work better after washing with an oil preparation.
- B. A rose oil mix will do a good job. Use this mix after the hair is partly dry for best results.

Rose Oil Mix

Make concentrate with:

- 30% rose oil
- 20% balsam
- 10% purple oil
- 30% bay rum
- 10% alcohol

Dilute the concentrate in a one-quart sprayer with 10 parts water to 1 part concentrate.

- IV. Dipping with a vinegar-water dip will lessen the dandruff problem as it helps to remove any soap residues. Dipping or scrubbing tough dandruff areas with prepodyne solution will also reduce dandruff.

Hair Growing Aids

A new hair coat will need to be grown. Calf hair is good only until it begins to thin and dry and then it should be removed to promote a new, fresh hair coat.

- A. Body clipping 90 to 120 days prior to the show or show season in most areas promotes fresh hair growth. (See Illustration 1.)

- 1. With regular beef head clippers (84AU blades), clip down on the animal; with plucking blades, clip up.



- 2. Leave some hair below the shoulder point for blending the shoulder into the neck; also, hair can be left between the forearm and shoulder joint to promote a smooth transition between the shoulder and the front leg. Usually, the forearm is shaved to the

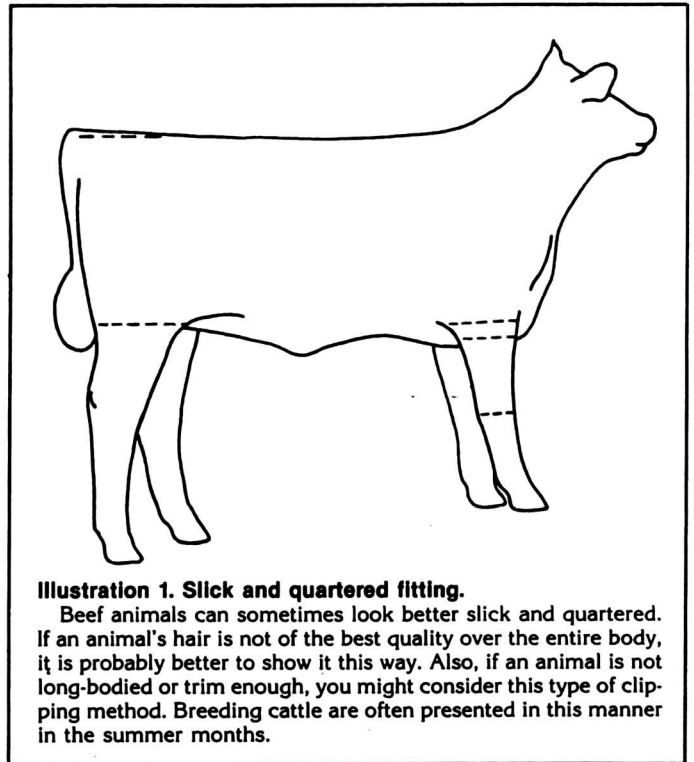


Illustration 1. Slick and quartered fitting.

Beef animals can sometimes look better slick and quartered. If an animal's hair is not of the best quality over the entire body, it is probably better to show it this way. Also, if an animal is not long-bodied or trim enough, you might consider this type of clipping method. Breeding cattle are often presented in this manner in the summer months.

knee and then blended in around the knee, exhibiting a more angular look to the front end of the animal.

- 3. Leave hair on the poll, tail head and hind legs. Sometimes the hair on the lower quarter is left as this hair is slow to return and is necessary when fitting steers.
- B. Bedding the animal in a dark place during the day shortens day length and promotes hair growing metabolism in the animal.
- C. Good circulation and movement of air is very important. A fan or humidifier and a mist system helps to promote new hair, particularly in the warmer months. A fogger that sprays up to one gallon per minute near a fan will cool the circulating air considerably.
- D. Daily rinsing is a must.
 - 1. Always (in the summer months especially) rinse the animal's body until it is cool to the touch. Pay particular attention to the belly and neck areas. Rinse twice daily when it is hot.
 - 2. Rinsing late in the evening and turning out wet will help the hair growth in the summer months also.
 - 3. Use a conditioning product on the hair each time you rinse.
- E. Brush, brush, brush.
 - 1. Brushing helps to stimulate hair growth, aids in production of natural oils, and helps to

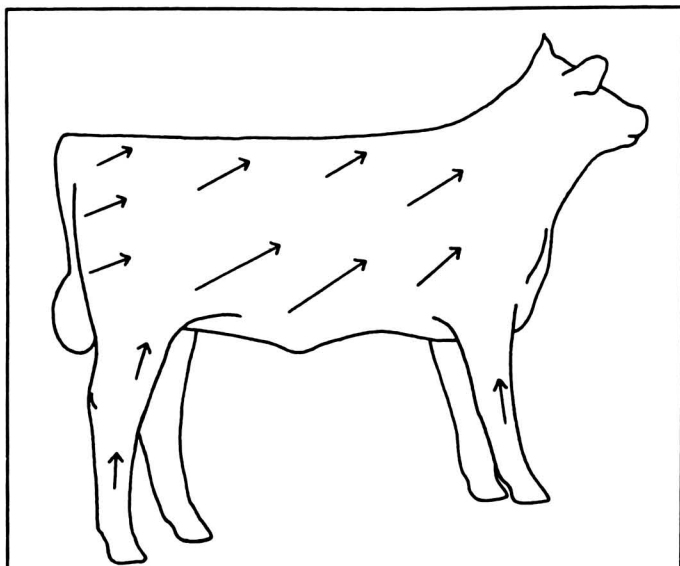


Illustration 2. Brushing and combing pattern.

- A. Begin by brushing hair straight forward.
- B. With more hair, brush at a 45-degree angle and gradually work toward desired angle.
- C. Use of a blower (from top to bottom and front to back) helps to train the hair the last 20 days. The tip of the nozzle should rest next to the skin and be moved slowly in an arc pattern for best results.

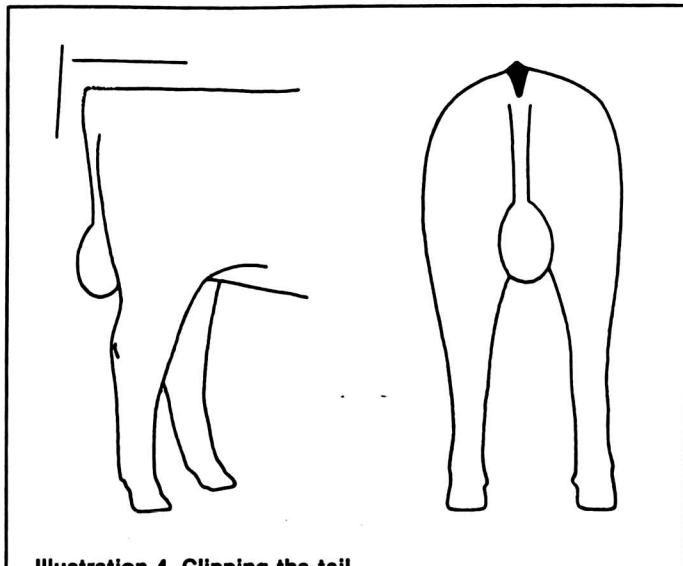


Illustration 4. Clipping the tail.

- A. Extend the hair at the tailhead so it has the appearance of a corner.
- B. The hair down the middle of the tail is clipped into a short "V." This gives the appearance of more width between the pins.
- C. A tailhead with a slight upswing on the end will help to level out the hip.
- D. The tailhead hair may be held up with wax or glue and then trimmed to the desired shape.

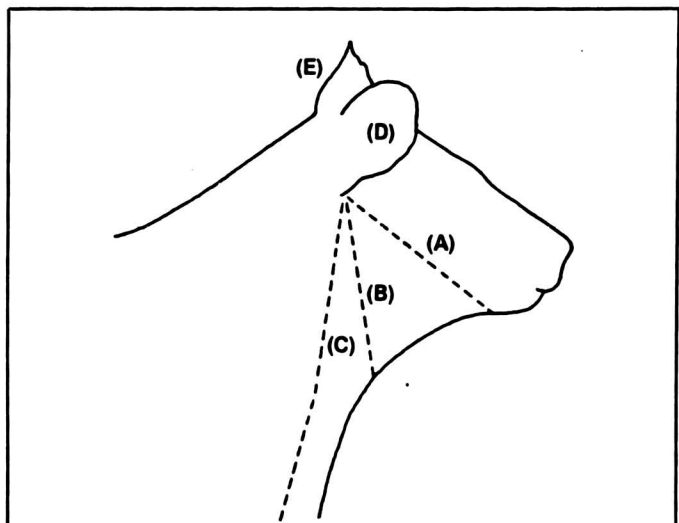


Illustration 3. Clipping the head.

Always clip against the natural direction of the hair pattern with the 84AU blades to achieve a close, smooth job. There are several clipping patterns, three of which are illustrated.

- A. This clip helps to fill out a narrow head by leaving the cheek hair in place and blending it into the brisket area.
- B. Conventional clip.
- C. This clip line promotes a longer extension of the neck. The line is blended in carefully and joins the line in the brisket area.
- D. Usually the hair is thinned on the ears promoting a more traditional look to the head.
- E. The poll hair is left on and blended into a peak. The poll hair serves to give style, length and eye appeal to the head.

even out rough condition (fat deposit) on market steers.

- a. Use a multi-tooth rubber brush in the early growth period.

- b. A rice root brush works best late in the hair growing period and serves to remove curl and add bloom to the hair. Always brush on clean, damp, conditioned hair.



- 2. Brush or pull the new and growing hair straight forward all over the body after each rinsing. (See Illustration 2.)

- F. Leg hair growth is very important in enhancing a straight-lined look.

- 1. Keep the pen clean and free of flies.
- 2. Brushing clean legs will promote hair growth.
- 3. Application of animal fat (lard) daily for 30 days or so will help in the leg hair growth.

Training Hair to Stand Up

- I. Apply rose oil mix daily.
- II. Slick Black, Sweet Georgia Brown or a Peach product will work also.
 - A. Use lightly every other day for 30 days. This

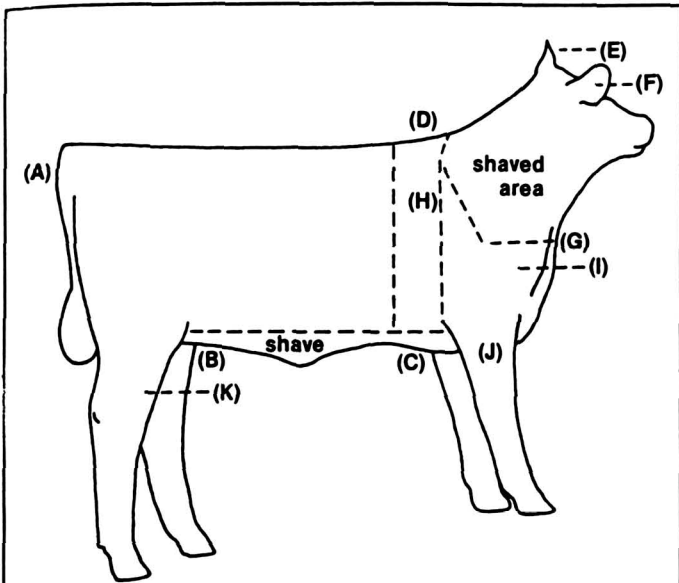


Illustration 5. Guidelines for clipping close areas.

- A. Tail and tailhead**—The tailhead area is used to enhance the visual effect of a level hip. It can add body length or thickness by the way it is clipped.
- B. Rear flank**—Use this as a guide for beginning the bellyline. This line can be used to create an illusion of more volume or less volume. By lowering the line from the standard clip and leaving long hair from the navel area back, a look of greater volume is achieved.
- C. Point of elbow**—Use this as a guide for ending the bellyline.
- D. Top of shoulder joining neck**—Hair should be utilized in this area to give the appearance of a smooth joining of these two parts.
- E. Poll**—Leave this hair on the head to give added head length and youthfulness.
- F. Ear**—Leave most of the hair on the ear; thinning is acceptable.
- G. Point of shoulder**—Use this as a guide point when shaving the front end. Hair should be trimmed very short in this area to reduce prominence.
- H. Behind the shoulder**—The hair is left in this area as long as possible to ensure proper blending of the shoulder joint.
- I. Under the shoulder point**—This hair and some neck hair is left long and used to blend in a prominent shoulder.
- J. Front leg**—Usually shave to the knee in breeding cattle to show angularity.
- K. Front of rear legs**—Shave this area to help give the appearance of a straighter hind leg.

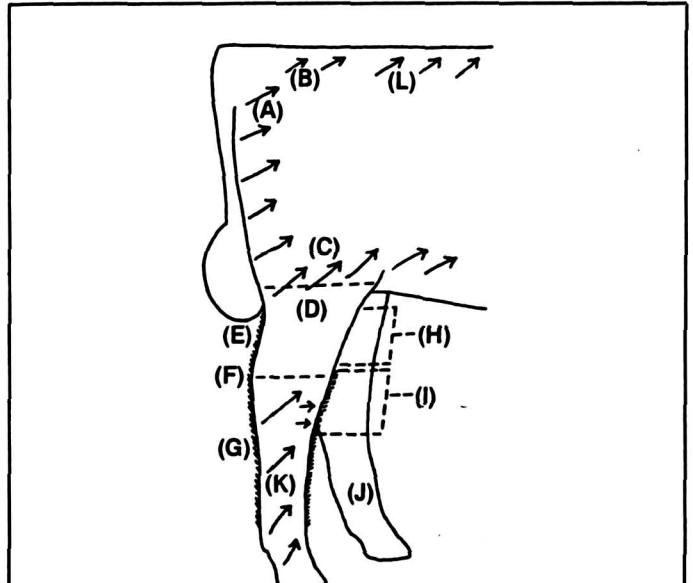


Illustration 6. Clipping the hindquarter and blocking the hind leg.

- A.** Hair in this area should be brushed around the hindquarter to add dimension when viewing the animal from the rear.
- B.** Hair in this area is used to fill in the hip to make it appear to be more level from hooks to pins.
- C.** Hair is pulled up and out and held in place to add muscularity.
- D.** This area is trimmed very short on steers, but hair is left longer on breeding cattle.
- E.** Hair is always left in this area above the hock to reduce hock prominence.
- F.** The ball of the hock is shaved to the skin in about a three-inch long area to reduce hock prominence.
- G.** The long hairs only are trimmed after boning the leg (pulling the hair up) to give the appearance of a straighter leg.
- H.** Shave or trim this area close to the skin, beginning right above the hock area to straighten the leg. (very important)
- I.** Leave all of the long hair here to fill in the hock joint area and to straighten the leg. (very important)
- J.** Trim this area and around the entire leg to give a straight, symmetrical appearance.
- K.** The hair on the inside and outside of the cannon bone is pulled slightly forward to help add hair length to the front of the leg.
- L.** The loin area in steers should be clipped flat on top and all of the hair left on the loin edge. On heifers, this area is clipped in an angular fashion, with the most hair remaining down the top line from the tail to the shoulder.

gives weight and manageability to the hair.

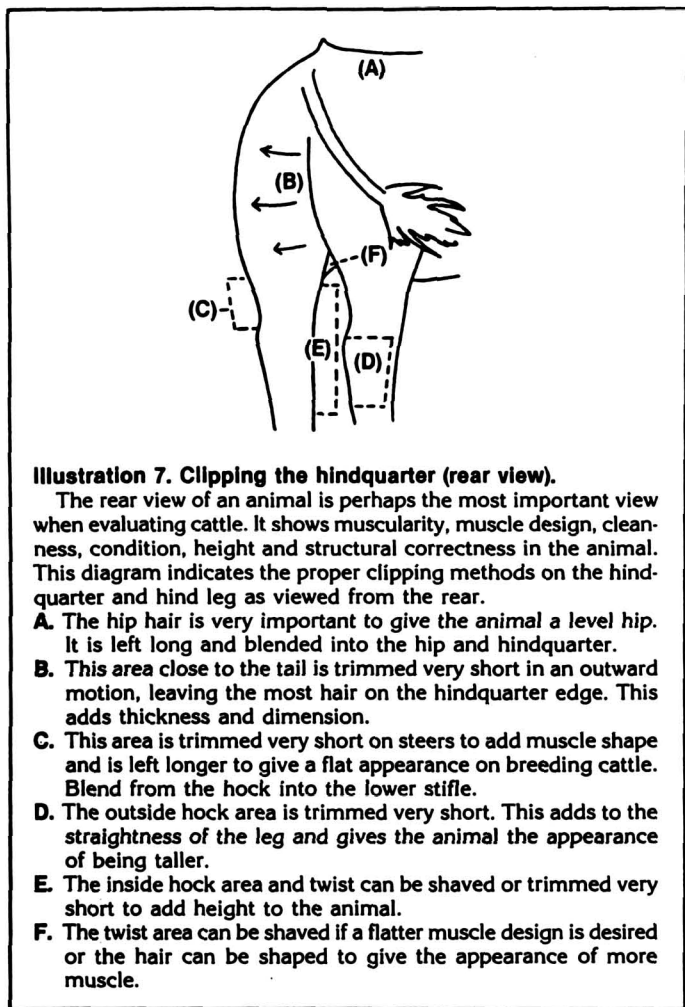
- B.** Hair training sprays are very drying.
 - C.** Astringent sprays are also drying, but can aid in clipping because they make the undercoat stand out straight.
 - D.** Bay rum or Absorbine liniment can be used.
- III. Motivation in this area is hard because progress is slow, but it is the most important part of fitting.

Clipping Essentials

- I. Clipping is perhaps the most rewarding part of this entire process. It's a great feeling to see the changes made in an animal by applying some

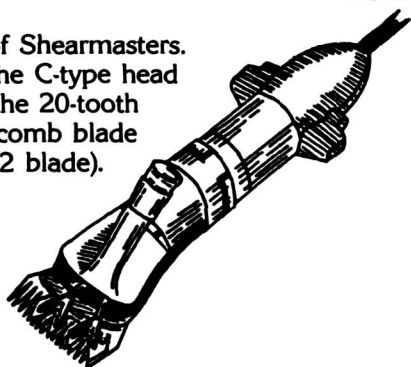
specific fitting techniques. Lots of practice and patience is necessary. (Refer to Illustrations 3, 4 and 5.)

- II. The key to a successful clip job is knowledge of your animal's faults and weaknesses. Not all animals are clipped alike. Clipping allows you as the artist to sculpt the ideal animal.
- III. Clean, conditioned hair is a must.
- IV. Clippers need to be in good order. You will need:
 - A. A regular pair of Sunbeams.
 - 1. Use standard, flat 84AU blades, or the plucking blade for shaving areas where you wish to leave more hair.



B. A pair of Shearmasters.

1. Use the C-type head with the 20-tooth goat comb blade (P7112 blade).



C. A pair of inexpensive small animal adjustable clippers will come in handy for fine fitting jobs.

D. Clipper oil and hair oil mix will be needed.

- V. The animal should be restrained for its safety and yours. The use of a blocking chute is best.

Clipping the Body

- I. This is where the actual sculpting comes in. If you are a beginner, use two hands—one to steady the clippers and one to hold them. Use the animal's body as a guide for your guiding hand.

- II. The hair is usually trimmed in an upward and forward motion. (See Illustrations 6 and 7.)
- III. Work one area at a time (shoulder, top line, etc.).
 - A. Evaluate carefully and trim off the hair accordingly.
 1. If the animal needs to exhibit a muscular appearance, then the shapes are full and corners are rounded.
 2. If the animal is to appear flat and angular, the shapes will be flatter and more angular.
 - B. Draw a picture in your mind of the effect you wish to achieve.
 - C. Mistakes and gaps will happen and serve as a good learning tool. You can learn only by doing the actual clipping yourself.
- IV. There are distinct differences between clipping breeding cattle and market steers.
 - A. In breeding cattle, flat, deep-tying muscles and angularity are important traits.
 - B. When clipping market cattle, try to enhance thickness, muscle definition, eye appeal and condition.
- V. At least two clips are necessary before perfection is reached.

Trimming Feet

- I. Trimming feet should be done on a regular basis every 30 to 60 days if (but only if) a structural change is desired.
- II. Proper trimming can correct structural problems and help the animal to move more freely.
- III. Trimming should be done by someone with experience. Permanent injury or movement disorders can be caused by inexperience.

Exercise

- I. Exercise is necessary. It serves to add muscle tone, increase appetite and firms over-conditioned animals.
- II. Moderate exercise is encouraged daily.

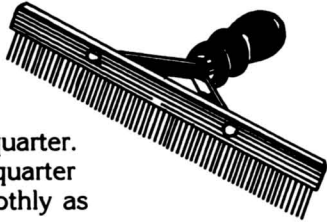
Show Day Preparation

- I. This is the day that all the hard work, long hours and patience pay off.
- II. Allow plenty of time, about 45 minutes per animal. Rinse and blow dry prior to this time, or use an alcohol or astringent spray rinse.
- III. Work the hair.
 - A. Apply an oil mix and brush it in.
 - B. Apply show foam over the entire body (except the legs). Brush it in and blow it very dry. The foam holds the hair and brings up the under coat.
 - C. Apply any other soft hair products like Slick Black, etc., on hard-to-hold areas if necessary. Any sticky substances like hair sprays or glue should be applied near the end of the preparation period.

- IV. Put up the tail. (See Illustration 8.)
- V. Leg preparation. Boning and clipping the legs promotes straightness and eye appeal in the animal.

A. Use spray glue, wax or Amway glycerine to hold leg hair in place to be clipped.

1. Apply the soap or wax evenly in a downward motion on the leg. Then pull the hair up and forward, one area at a time, with a scotch comb. Don't bone the legs too high on the hindquarter. The leg and hindquarter must join as smoothly as possible.
2. If the wax is too hard to go on smoothly, heat slightly under a heat lamp or in hot water. If the wax or soap dries too quickly on the leg, dip the scotch comb in hot water and it will pull more easily through the hair.



- B. Clip legs again for final effect. (Refer to Illustrations 6 and 7.)
- C. Paint the legs.
 1. Use a non-oil base paint (like Streaks N' Tips) after boning and clipping the legs.

D. Paint the feet.

VI. Final preparation.

A. Apply any glue or hair spray on hard-to-hold areas on the body and a final oil shine, if needed. (If the glue is sprayed in the wrong area, lanolin (spray) will remove it without creating an oily spot.)

B. Put on the show halter and adjust it up near the eyes of the animal.

C. Check the animal's fill (stomach). A proper fill is important.

1. Some long hay and/or water will help to fill an animal.
2. Fill gives the animal the appearance of having volume.

D. Take the animal out of the chute and walk him around if time allows. Check for any last minute touches.

VII. Ways to remove hair products after the show. Make sure all are washed out thoroughly with soap or skin irritation can occur. The following make this project easier:

- A. Outcast or E-Z out.
- B. Cream-type hand cleaner.
- C. Shout laundry cleaner.
- D. Alcohol and purple oil, mixed.
- E. Mineral oil.

AJ

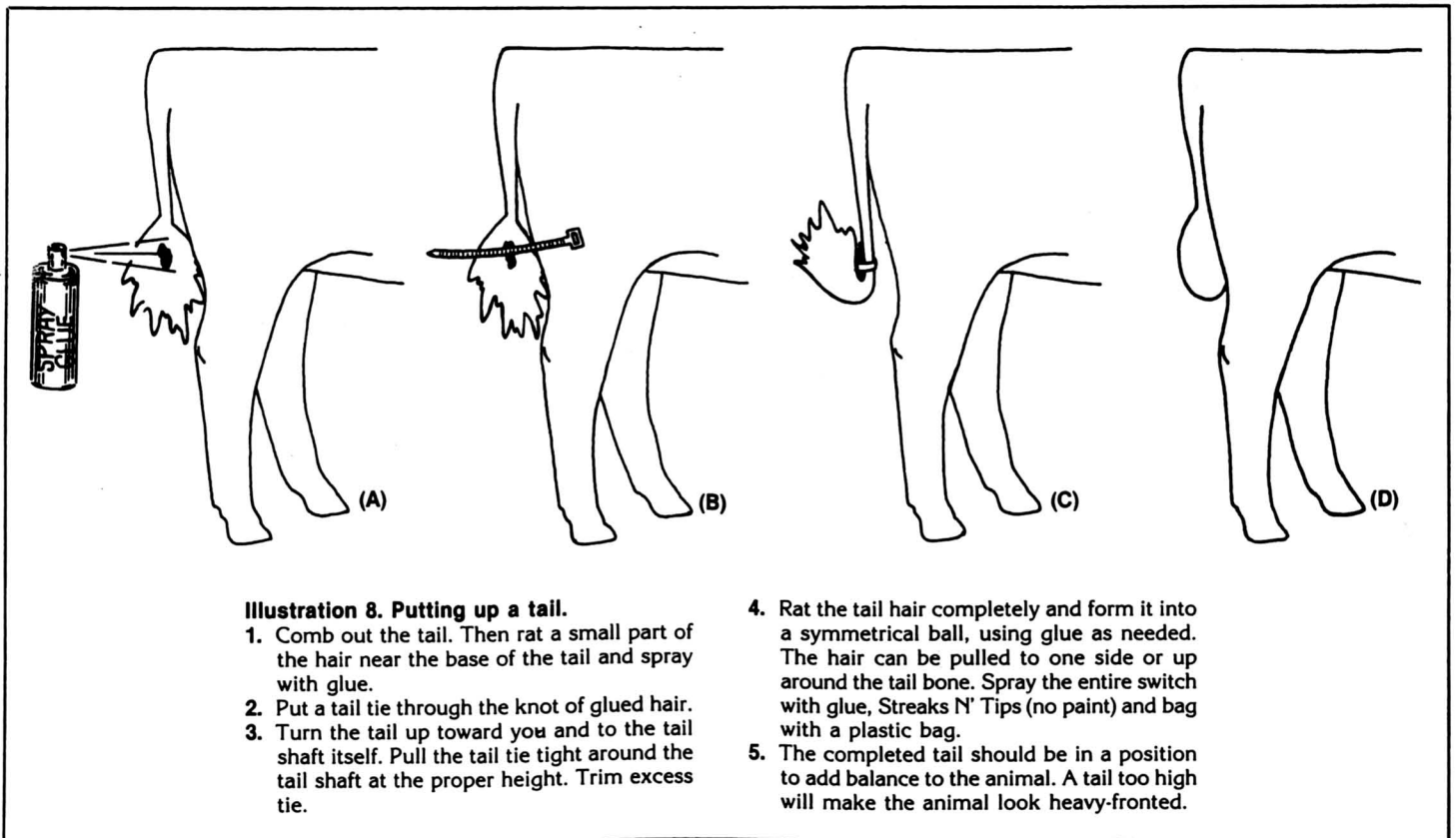


Illustration 8. Putting up a tail.

1. Comb out the tail. Then rat a small part of the hair near the base of the tail and spray with glue.
2. Put a tail tie through the knot of glued hair.
3. Turn the tail up toward you and to the tail shaft itself. Pull the tail tie tight around the tail shaft at the proper height. Trim excess tie.

4. Rat the tail hair completely and form it into a symmetrical ball, using glue as needed. The hair can be pulled to one side or up around the tail bone. Spray the entire switch with glue, Streaks N' Tips (no paint) and bag with a plastic bag.
5. The completed tail should be in a position to add balance to the animal. A tail too high will make the animal look heavy-fronted.

Equipment Supply List

Grooming Supplies

Rice root brush	Leg adhesive
Soft brush	Slick Black, etc.
Multi-toothed brush	Final mist
Scotch comb	Tail ties
Tail comb	Paint
Sprayer	Streaks N' Tips
Hoof brush	Show foam
Blower	Hair spray
Rose oil mix	Black Glow
Boning soap or wax	Scissors
Tail glue	Lanolin spray
Body adhesive	E-Z Out, etc.

Other Supplies

Feed pans
Buckets
Extension cords
Clippers
Blades
Baggies
Broom, fork, pliers, etc.
Muzzle (if needed)
Neck ropes
Blocking chute

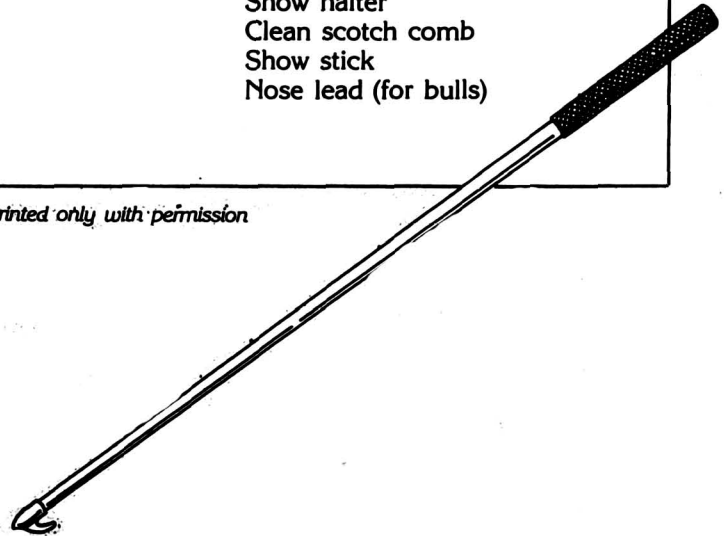
Washing Supplies

Soap
Vinegar dip
Balsam
Scrub brush
Hose and nozzle
Extra halter

Show Ring Supplies

Show halter
Clean scotch comb
Show stick
Nose lead (for bulls)

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Wendy Gauld was born and raised on a farming and ranching operation in the Santa Ynez Valley of California. She received her bachelor's degree in animal science, a master's degree in agriculture, and a secondary teaching credential in agriculture, all from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. Wendy taught high school agriculture one semester before assuming the beef technician position at California State University-Fresno. There for four years, Wendy was in charge of the purebred cattle and the student projects. She then taught one semester at Cal Poly. Presently, Wendy is involved in her own livestock photography business, fits club calves for sales, conducts fitting and showing seminars, judges various shows in the California region, and is a partner in West Coast Chianinas.

"I find photography and promotion a very rewarding aspect of the beef industry," she says. "Always challenging, it provides an opportunity to be associated with the people I like and admire . . . still like to be involved with young people and fitting cattle."