



**This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at <https://ksre-learn.com/cattle-fair-preparation>

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Cattle Chat: Preparing for the county fair

K-State Beef Cattle Institute experts offer tips for success at the local livestock show

By Lisa Moser, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Now that school is out for the summer, 4-H families oftentimes are busy getting their fair projects ready for exhibition.

In the case of beef projects, the experts at the Kansas State University Beef Cattle Institute offer some guidance on how 4-Hers can have positive learning experiences with their animals.

On a recent [Cattle Chat](#) podcast, K-State beef cattle nutritionist Phillip Lancaster said it begins with making a feeding plan.

“One of the most common mistakes is that people either underfeed or overfeed their market animals,” Lancaster said.

He gave the example of an 800-pound market calf that the 4-Her takes possession of after weaning should consume about 25 pounds of total feed per day, and 20 of those pounds should be provided as grain.

“It is especially important to feed them properly in the last 60 days before the fair to get the appropriate finish (body condition) on the calf,” Lancaster said. “To do that, it is important to weigh the feed to make sure they are getting the right amount.”

Along with feeding them adequately, K-State veterinarian Brian Lubbers said it is important to keep feed and health records.

“To help 4-Hers calculate the calf’s average daily gain and cost of gain, it is good to have a beginning weight, mid-weight and final weight before leaving for the fair,” Lubbers said. “All health treatments need to be documented as well.”

Planning for the fair also involves training the cattle to respond to the 4-Her leading them with a halter, and placing their feet in the proper stance with a show stick.

“It is important for 4-Hers to halter-break the calves early before the cattle are big and harder to handle,” K-State veterinarian Bob Larson said. “To do that, families should follow low-stress handling techniques and give 4-Hers plenty of time to work with their calves before going to the fair.”

It also helps to expose the animals to different handlers and noise situations because the county fair can offer an array of new sights, sounds and smells, said the experts.

To hear the full discussion, listen to the [Cattle Chat](#) podcast on your preferred streaming platform.

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