Dairy Caring for Animals

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Chapter 1
Introduction

This resource book was designed to be used as a resource by 4-H members who are participating in the Dairy Heifer and/or the Dairy Cow Projects. Younger members may need help reading this book. Members are encouraged to check with their advisor or county Extension office for a complete set of guidelines for the project. The 4-H Dairy Projects involve the selection, care, and feeding of one or more dairy cows and/or heifers. Youth will need to purchase the appropriate project and record book every year.

Opportunities of the Dairy Project

Members who are involved in the dairy project have many opportunities.

1. Training in feeding and managing dairy cattle.
2. Learning how to produce a quality product for the consumer.
3. Exploring the possibility of expanding to make a profitable enterprise.

The dairy project will require some investment on the member’s part. Milking facilities and special housing facilities many need to be obtained.

Guidelines for a Dairy Heifer or Dairy Cow Project

1. Complete annually one or more of the following project and record books that correspond to the type of project you are taking:
   
   Dairy Heifer Project and Record Book
   Dairy Cow Project and Record Book

2. Attend or complete a quality assurance program each year you enroll in a dairy cattle project.

3. Secure project animals and keep them in your continual care and possession.

4. Make sure your project entry form is completed and submitted to the county office on time.

5. Be sure to review the rules outlined in your county fair premium book if you plan to participate at the county fair. Regulations may vary from county to county.

Benefits to 4-H Members

1. Selection and Judging—From the time you select your project animal until the time you show your animal, you will learn the characteristics to look for in a modern dairy animal.

2. Record Keeping—A requirement for the dairy cattle project is record keeping. By keeping records, you will
learn about the costs associated with feed, equipment, and the birth or purchase of an animal. This will help you to understand the concept of profit and loss.

3. **Nutrition**—You will learn the nutritional requirements for dairy cattle at all stages of production and how to balance a diet for maximum production. You will also learn various feedstuffs that are commonly fed to dairy cattle.

4. **Health**—You will learn about common diseases and parasites of dairy cattle and what you can do to prevent them.

5. **Reproduction and Genetics**—You will learn about the reproductive systems of dairy cattle and the conception and birth processes. You will also learn how traits are passed from parents to offspring.

6. **Quality Assurance**—You will increase your awareness of the issues about animal well-being and the assurance of quality products from dairy cattle.

7. **Competition**—You will learn how to groom and show your animal and how to win and lose graciously in the show ring.

8. **Ownership Pride**—Owning and caring for your animal gives you a feeling of pride and satisfaction that comes with a job well done.

9. **Professional and Social Development**—Participating in a dairy cattle project will bring you into contact with other profitable dairy producers, project leaders, and other 4-H members. You will also come into contact with others who are involved in the dairy industry.

10. **Consumer Awareness**—Completing a dairy project will help you to better understand how dairy products enter into the food chain.

Please review the Additional Learning Experiences and Subjects for a 4-H Club Presentation listed here. Also feel free to identify additional opportunities.

### Additional Learning Experiences

- Participate on a dairy/livestock judging team.
- Attend livestock project seminars.
- Demonstrate fitting and showing.
- Participate in a Dairy Skill-a-thon.
- Visit a dairy producer’s operation.
- Visit a feed mill.
- Visit a local veterinarian.
- Visit a milk processing plant.
- Visit a store to study the different ways that dairy products are marketed.

### Subjects for a 4-H Club Presentation

- Why I chose dairy cattle for a project
- What I have learned in my dairy cattle project
- The importance of the dairy industry
- Dairy cattle diseases and their prevention
- Milk processing and milk products
- Why is milk good for you?
- Animal care
- Quality assurance
Teamwork for a Common Goal

The purpose of all project work is to enhance the education, experience, and development of young people, a purpose that is not realized without the involvement of several people working as a team. The successful completion of a dairy project depends on the combined efforts of you, parents, 4-H leaders, and experts. All of you have responsibilities.

To the Parents

How much your child learns in his or her 4-H dairy cattle project will depend on the kind of support and encouragement you give. Much of your time will be spent helping your child obtain the resources needed to complete this project. You may offer other assistance if necessary, but you should never interfere with your child’s opportunity to learn by doing. Be available to listen to his or her needs or concerns and offer praise whenever possible. Stress the value in doing one’s own work and help your child realize how much he or she has learned from that work. To most children, a sense of accomplishment is more important than receiving a ribbon or a trophy.

It is inappropriate for a professional to own, care for, or groom the project animal. The 4-H members are to own their project animals and keep those animals under their care. For this project, separate pens, housing facilities, and milking equipment may be needed, as well as feeding facilities and materials for keeping animal records. It may also be necessary to purchase special feed supplements and special grooming and showing equipment.

Remember, your son’s or daughter’s success in this and all projects will depend on the extent of encouragement and support (in the appropriate measures) that only you can give.

To the 4-H Advisor

As people directly concerned with youth development, it is the responsibility of every 4-H advisor and agent to help each member who wants a dairy project (and has financing and suitable facilities) to secure one. Keep in mind that people in your position have exceptional influence with youth, and your encouragement and help may not only lead to completed projects but also contribute to the development of a responsible citizen.

To the 4-H Member

After you have made the decision to take a dairy project, it is important that you know what type of animal you are looking for, how to feed it, the diseases that may affect your animal, management techniques, and many other important concepts.

By teaching you these concepts through information and experience, this project will make it possible for you to produce a high-quality, wholesome, and nutritious product that the consumer will want to buy. To have a successful project, you must be willing to study and review the information contained in this handbook and apply it to your project.

This resource handbook will enhance the learning activities that you will do in your project and record books.