



Basic Considerations for Junior Beef Cattle Projects

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If you're going to show a steer or beef heifer, you need to consider some basic points, in addition to the quality of the animal.

EXHIBITOR ELIGIBILITY: In general, exhibitors must be Texas residents at least 8 but not more than 19 years of age, from the third grade to high school senior, and be bona fide members of a 4-H club or FFA chapter. At all major shows, and most county shows, exhibitors must enter as a 4-H or FFA group through their County Extension Agent or Agricultural Science Teacher. For most shows, entries may be made only in the name of an individual exhibitor, with partnerships not allowed. Deadlines for entry range mostly from one to three months before the show.

ANIMAL CERTIFICATION: For all major shows, and many county shows, all steers must be certified through the Texas Steer Validation Program. This is done by county validation committees some time in June so as to meet the major show ownership deadline of July 1. County shows may have other ownership dates and certification procedures.

Heifers generally must be registered in their particular breed registry in the sole name of the exhibitor (before July 1 for the State Fair and November 1 for major winter shows). Depending on the show and breed, ownership is verified by either: date the registry was issued; date of delivery; date of transfer; or date of sale, as these are listed on the original registration certificate. Ear tattoos or brands usually are checked at the show for agreement with registration certificates.

AGE: Market steers at major shows no longer have any age requirements, so teeth are not a factor. It appears steers can be competitive from a wide range of barely 12 months to perhaps 24 months of age, depending on inherent genetic size, maturing pattern, and nutritional management. Most steers are shown probably in the range of 15 to 21 months of age. Genetically larger steers generally should be nutritionally "pushed" for fast gain to show at younger ages or else they may be too heavy when adequately finished. Genetically smaller steers may need to be fed to gain slower and shown at older ages or else they may be too fat at desirable weights.

Heifers are shown by age according to birth date on registration papers. Typical classes are:

Summer calf	May and younger
Spring calf	March and April
Junior calf	January and February
Winter calf	November and December
Senior calf	September and October
Late Summer yearling	July and August
Early Summer yearling	May and June
Late Junior yearling	March and April
Early Junior yearling	January and February
Senior yearling	September thru December

However, these classes vary depending on the breed and show. There may be more classes with narrower age ranges or fewer classes with wider ranges.

BREED: Most large steer shows have purebred classes for British breeds (Angus, Hereford, Polled Hereford, Red Angus, and Shorthorn) and some other purebreds. Remaining steers may be shown either: (1) as purebreds, such as Brangus, or by breed crosses such as Charolais crosses, Santa Gertrudis crosses, etc., or (2) by "type" such as all Continental (Exotic) breeds and crosses, and all American (Bos

indicus or Brahman-type) crosses. Smaller shows often do not have classes for breeds or breed crosses but divide by the three breed-types, British (usually purebred only), American, and Continental.

At all major shows, and many local shows, breed classification for steers is determined by some person or persons (called classifiers) selected by the show for this purpose. Two things are important here: (1) read the specifications in the specific show premium list for breed classes, as they are not the same for all shows; (2) class will be determined by the classifier(s). Classifiers evaluate (with the specifications of the class at that show in mind) only according to visible characteristics of the animal. The breeder or seller's word or knowing actual genetic background may be a guide to breed classification, but these may just be sources of confusion and disappointment. Go by what the animal looks like. Nothing else will matter at the show.

In major shows (except Fort Worth), and most smaller shows, steers classified out of the class where entered are moved, either to a Brahman-type division, usually called American Breeds and Crosses (ABC), or to a class called All Other Breeds and Crosses (AOB) or Other Breeds and Crosses (OBC).

Heifers are shown by their respective breed, or breed-type at smaller shows. Except for some small local or county shows, heifers must be properly registered in a recording association.

WEIGHT: Steers at major shows must meet minimum weights, usually 1000 pounds (900 pounds at Fort Worth). There are no maximum weights, but some shows have a maximum payweight if a steer is sold at the show. Steers are broken down by weight within a breed or type division, usually into groups of equal number without consideration of weight range within a class. Usually there are three weight classes but this can vary. Some shows reweigh animals after showing, in which case steers must weigh within some range of their weigh-in weight, generally either 5% or 60 pounds. Class weight ranges from recent major shows can be obtained from various sources, including the following website: <http://etbeef.tamu.edu> under "Junior Programs".

Heifers do not have weight classifications.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS: Most major shows require, under regulations of the Texas Animal Health Commission, a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection, formerly called a "health certificate", which must be obtained from a licensed veterinarian before arriving at the show. Some shows do not require a certificate for steers. All major shows, and some county shows, have drug residue avoidance programs for steers. If so, exhibitors may be required to allow collection from steers of body tissues or other samples for laboratory analysis. Check with your veterinarian, County Extension Agent, Agricultural Science Teacher, or some other knowledgeable person before using a product. Some products have long withdrawal periods, and there are others you might not think of as drugs which might leave a detectable residue that can cause disqualification. Don't take any chances!

FITTING / GROOMING RESTRICTIONS: All shows have restrictions on how steers and heifers may be prepared for show, and who can be involved in fitting or grooming. These restrictions may range from rigid inspection of so-called "slick-shearing" for steers to cursory examination for colored dressing materials. Some shows do not allow, at the show, hair clipping or the use of trim chutes or electric hair blowers or fans. Consult the particular show rules for clarification.

GENERAL: All of these factors should be considered before obtaining a steer or heifer. The most recent premium list for shows being considered should be consulted every year before obtaining animals. Rules may be changed after animals are purchased, so read the current rules carefully before entering and exhibiting. Even then, shows may be slow in updating and rewording premium lists to conform with actual operating procedures. However, thorough knowledge of rules in premium lists may save confusion and bad feelings. And there is no substitute for experience. Rely on those who have it.