

How to Halter Break a Show Calf

Halter breaking a calf - steer or heifer for the show ring can be a really challenging but also a rewarding experience.

Instructions

Things You'll Need:

- adequate pen
- show steer or heifer
- nylon halter
- grooming brushes
- good solid tying area with shade
- bag of range cubes

1.

The first thing that you want to do when you bring your show steer or heifer home to halter break is to have a pen ready that is about 20' by 30'. It can be a little smaller but wouldn't go much bigger. It must have adequate shade and a good solid place to tie him up.

2.

Put a nylon halter on the calf and let him drag the lead for a couple of weeks to just calm down and let him get used to his new surroundings. As he walks and steps on the lead, he will learn how to deal with resistance which will help in the halter breaking process

3.

Start introducing range cubes by putting a handful in his feed bowl at feeding time. Cattle really like them once they get used to the texture.

4.

Spend as much time as possible around the pen. Let him get to know you. Go in the pen and clean up manure not crowding him. Just make your presence known by doing everyday activities in the vicinity of the pen.

5.

When you first tie your calf up, make sure you tie him up in a way that you can get to him and untie him quickly if need be. I use a type of slip knot where I can pull one end and he immediately comes untied. Tie him about head high

and not much slack, maybe about 8" to 12" of slack in the lead. Never tie with a lot of slack when he can tangled up in it.

6.

The first time he's tied, only leave him about 30 minutes and stay close by to make sure he doesn't fight the lead too much. You can gradually build up the length of time he is tied. While he is tied, start hand feeding a few range cubes. Once he starts accepting them from your hand, he will really look forward to seeing and getting a "treat".

7.

Hands-on is very important. When he is tied, use your grooming brushes and brush and rub all over him. They usually like to be rubbed and brushed around the tail head area and under their neck.

8.

When you untie him, try walking him. Start taking a few steps around the pen, stop and give a range cube and praise and try a few more steps. Always do this in an enclosed area and never in open ground. If they ever get away from you, they will know they can from then on and will continue to try. In most shows, if your project gets away from you 3 times, they will excuse you from the showing. It's all mental - if they don't know that they can get away, they won't try.

9.

When it is time to turn your steer or heifer calf loose, always let him go "on your terms", never on his. Hold onto him talking softly and try rubbing on his head, letting him smell of you. Slowly drop the lead.