



# Tips for Beginning a Livestock Project: Market Steers

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## Introduction

The 4-H junior livestock program develops life skills in thousands of youth across Utah. Youth gain confidence and responsibility as they feed and care for quality animals in preparation for exhibition and marketing of their project. Unfortunately for some youth, raising livestock becomes a disappointing experience when their project is sifted for being too light, performs poorly or is discounted by the judge. All too often an exhibitor unknowingly makes a

wrong decision. Perhaps, at the beginning of the project, a youth selects too small of an animal which physically cannot gain the required pounds for entry into the show or the youth chooses to feed a cheaper, nutritionally imbalanced feed. Through simple planning and following a few basic tips, a potential negative experience could turn into a positive life changing experience and build the 4-H livestock program across Utah. In general, a steer that is 14 to 18 months old and weighs close to 1,250-1,350 lbs is the ideal market steer.

Days Before Show	270	210	120	30	0
Weight (lbs)	700	880	1045	1195	1250
Expected Daily Gain (lbs)	2.5-3	2.5-3	2.5-3.5	2.5-3.5	2.5-3.5
Amount to feed each day (lbs)	Grain-15 Hay-3-4	Grain-18 Hay-4-5	Grain-21 Hay-5-6	Grain-18 Hay-11-12	Grain-18 Hay- 11-12
Quality of feed (CP %/TDN %)	13% CP 80% TDN	13% CP 80% TDN	13% CP 80% TDN	13% CP 80% TDN	13% CP 80% TDN

## Factors Causing Poor Weight Gains in Market Beef Projects.

**Exposure to the elements:** Feed intake may decline when steers are exposed to elevated temperatures resulting in lower weight gains. Environmental management tools, such as shades, fans and/or sprinklers should be considered if temperatures are excessive. Extreme cold and windy conditions also adversely affect cattle health and decrease weight gain.

**Feed that is not nutritionally balanced:** As a general rule 75% of the steer's feed should consist of grain and 25% should be roughage. The level and ratio of calcium and phosphorus are also important for proper growth and health of steers. When feeding show steers, the calcium/phosphorus ratio should be approximately 2:1. Diets high in phosphorus levels compared to calcium may cause urinary calculi.

***Inconsistent feeding/watering or sudden changes in feeds:*** Make it a priority to feed on a set schedule; i.e., twice a day at 7 AM and 7 PM. It is extremely important that changing rations be a gradual process. Irregular feeding causes stomach distress and may cause permanent stomach damage, both of which result in a condition called “acidosis” which reduces weight gains.

***Diseases and illness:*** Stomach worms cause irritation and inflammation of the stomach and intestinal linings, which reduces nutrient absorption and results in reduced animal performance. This can be prevented by providing the animal with a dewormer. Be sure to follow withdrawal time requirements carefully. Failure to follow withdrawal times may result in illegal residues in the carcass.

***Water:*** Limited availability of water reduces animal performance quicker and more dramatically than any other nutrient deficiency. Water quantity and quality may affect feed consumption. Cattle in all circumstances should have free access to quality water.



## References

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This publication is issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Noelle E. Cockett, Vice President for Extension and Agriculture, Utah State University.