

PROJECT MASTERY/BEEF - ESSAY #1 – MASTERY (504 words)

I have been in 4-H for eight years and it has been a terrific experience. One of my favorite projects has been Beef.

I started out with my beef project years ago when I caught a calf in the county calf scramble. Since that first calf from the scramble, I have raised many beef animals since. I have learned a lot along the way such as different breeds of beef, types of feed for beef, how to groom my cattle, medication for cattle, showmanship skills, and how to break a calf to lead. Some years this is a challenge because every animal has its own personality and they can be super stubborn!

After raising & showing my scramble steer, T-Bone, I was inspired to get some breeding stock and start my own small herd of beef. I always anxiously await the birth of the new calves. Just last year I was able to donate a calf back to the calf scramble so that another 4-H'er might be able to get a start in a beef project. I have also been able to donate packages of beef to fundraisers that benefit our community.

As a Junior leader for beef I have mentored some of the younger members in my 4-H club. I have also been able to teach a fitting & grooming workshop to those who recently caught calves in the 4-H Scramble on how to prepare them for shows. It's rewarding to see these new beef project members leading their animals into the show ring with confidence after learning more about showmanship. I have used my beef showmanship knowledge to assist others on the county beef show day with their animals too.

One of my goals every year with each of my steers is to get them to a decent market weight by fair time. In order to achieve this I have experimented with different feeds to find the right combination for the best rate of gain. Another goal was to increase the size of my beef herd and each year I've added at least one animal to raise and show so that now I have increased to a small herd of 15 cattle. The past couple of years I have taken at least four or five head of cattle to shows.

Some of what I have learned through working with my beef project has really been helpful when I became part of a livestock judging team at school, preparing a speech for the Junior Beef Association Contest, and also when our school hosted a petting zoo. It was fun to bring in one of my steers and share facts about cattle with the students who attended the petting zoo.

I rarely get to sleep in due to the fact that I have to get out to the barn each morning to feed, water, and care for my herd. It takes a lot of dedication and responsibility, but I wouldn't trade it for anything, because I really love my beef project and showing cattle!