



heifer could be ready for slaughter at 800 to 900 pounds and heifer feeder calves usually cost less per pound in the first place. They also sell for less per pound when finished but if you are keeping the meat that does not make much difference.

Select a calf that weighs at least 350 pounds and is healthy. If not recently dewormed, treat the calf with a chemical dewormer. Treat for external parasites if they are present and keep the calf under as little stress as possible. Plenty of cool shade is important as is plenty of fresh water.

Nutrition is the science of feeding the right amount of the right feed. Start your new arrival on hay and a small amount of grain feed. Have plenty of water and a mineral-vitamin-salt mixture available also. As your steer gets used to his new home and stays healthy, you can increase the amount of grain feed up to about 2% of his body weight per day. This is considered full feed and after he cleans up the grain feed you should give him some hay to finish up on. You might go a little over the 2% of body weight figure but be careful. Overfeeding can cause bloat, founder and digestive acid build-up which can be dangerous.

When your steer weighs around 500 pounds he should gain about 2.0 pounds per day and increase that to around 3.0 pounds per day by the time he reaches 900 pounds. When he slows down building muscle and starts getting fat he is about ready for slaughter. As he gets fatter the meat gets more tender but it's expensive to put on fat. Lean meat is where the food value is with the fat adding juiciness and flavor. The small amounts of fat mixed throughout a steak is called marbling and this fat is what makes the meat better. Excess fat on the outside of the muscle is like the fat at the edge of a rib steak and you will trim it off and throw it away.

Most commercial feed companies have various feeds designed for steers of different ages and sizes. You would likely start with a "grower" feed designed to add weight to your steer but not make him fat. Later you would want to switch to a "fattener" with more energy in it to finish the animal out.

If you have just one steer for your family to use, perhaps you will want to slaughter the steer yourself. U.S.D.A. Farmer's Bulletin Number 2263, "Beef — Slaughtering, Cutting, Preserving and Cooking on the Farm" is an excellent "how to" guide. Otherwise check with a local custom slaughterhouse about processing your meat for you.

If you have several steers ready for slaughter, they should be sold wisely. Many small slaughterhouses buy small numbers of steers to have meat to sell. You could also sell your steers to a larger packing plant or even at an auction market. You might also check with some friends to see if they want to buy a steer for their family. Then you can work something out with a local slaughterhouse to handle the processing of your home-grown beef.

