Goal (learning objective)
Youth will:
- Learn about one method of haltering and gentling cattle (beef or dairy) or a lamb
- Learn about pressure points
- Learn about different types of halters and appropriate uses

Supplies
- Rope halter
- Show halter
- Lamb rope halter
- Horse halter
- Plastic roping calf head
- Handout 1 - “Halter Breaking” (make enough copies for group)
- Handout 2 - “Halters” (make enough copies for group)

Pre-lesson preparation
- Make photocopies of Handout 1 and Handout 2
- Gather halters and plastic roping calf head
- Read/review handouts, have an understanding of pressure points used with halters

Lesson directions and outline
Share the following information with the youth:

Halter breaking and gentling your animal is very important for your animal’s safety and your own. It plays a critical part to the success of your animal project. Using the proper equipment and method will set you up for success by fair time.

This process takes time and repeated practice which needs to start as soon as you bring your project animal home.

Conducting the activity (DO)
1. Have a volunteer pass out the handouts to the group.
2. Review with members the parts of the halter:
   a. Nose piece
   b. Lead strap
3. Review proper fitting of the halter on the animal’s head. The lead strap should always be on the animal’s left side.
4. Demonstrate and let members practice putting the halter on the roping calf head model. (It is a common mistake for youth and adults to put halters on wrong - upside down or backwards).
5. Discuss with members how pressure is applied at the cheek and show where the pressure is placed when the halter is put on upside down (the pressure is at the ear).
6. Show the difference between a horse halter and a rope halter. Demonstrate how the horse halter does not put pressure at the cheek whereas the rope halter does.
7. Show the difference between a chain strap and a rope strap under the chin, explain how that can cause an animal to move and react differently.
8. Review Handout 1, discuss the method of halter breaking a calf or lamb.
What did we learn? (REFLECT)

- Ask: What are the differences between a horse halter and a beef halter?
- Ask: Where is pressure applied to teach your animal to lead?
- Ask: What are the similarities between a beef halter and a lamb halter?

Why is that important? (APPLY)

- Ask: Why is it important to practice leading and working with your animal?
- Ask: Why is it important to work with the appropriate equipment? What can happen if you have the wrong equipment?
- Ask: Where else in life is having the right equipment important?

Resources


After members have selected their animal they need to halter break it as soon as possible. Some animals are not fit for being a show animal. Their temperament does not allow them to be gentle and worked with in a close manner. Some animals like working only with their owners and do not like crowds or loud noises. Members need to find out as soon as possible what kind of temperament their animal has. It will take about two weeks to properly gentle a calf however, members will be able to tell in 3 or 4 days if their animal will gentle down.

There are many ways to halter break your animal. The following has been very successful.

1. Halter and let the calf drag the halter for a couple days, this way the calf understands the rope will stop them, as they step on it.

2. Tie the calf to a secure post. Approximately two feet from the ground leaving about two feet of space between the calf and post.

3. If the calf throws himself, and is not in danger, let him lay and think the situation over. Don’t yell at or frighten him.

4. Assuming the calf is not in danger of hurting himself, leave the calf tied up, pack water and feed to the calf twice a day for a week.

5. On the third day talk and calmly pet the calf. Comb with a scotch comb for about 10 minutes twice a day.

6. On the 8th or 9th day lead the calf to water and then back to his spot for feed.

7. Repeat for another 6 to 7 days. Members will be able to tell when the calf understands and accepts them as a friend

8. Members can also start practicing stopping with the calf’s head up, when stopping at the water tank and the post. This is good showmanship practice.

Tips for success:

- When having calves tied, up be mindful of how long the rope is between the post and the calf. Having it too long will allow the calf to get tangled up in the rope and injured. Also having the rope too high is a problem, if they fall. Some claves will pull back against the post and not release. Make sure your calf learns to release.
- Members and families should have a quite gentle manner around the calves. This reduces the stress of people and animals.
- Understanding animal flight zones is important as the animal becomes tamer those zones get smaller.

This procedure and time schedule can be adjusted to fit the temperament of the calf. Remember, some animals are NOT suitable as project calves. Find out early so there is time to get another calf.
Halters are a “tool” to use when halter breaking livestock. There are many kinds of halters, using the correct one and using it properly is important.

You should know the parts of the halter, their purpose, and where it is located when placed on the animal. Understanding the relationship of the halter parts and the underlying pressure points is helpful when teaching your calf to be respectful of the halter. Teaching them to lead when they are young or smaller in weight is easier and less stressful on you and the calf and insures success at show time.

**Headstall**: Is used to keep the halter on top of the head; it is set over the poll and behind the ears of your animal. Pressure points under the headstall and behind the ears causes your animal to move forward when leading.

**Nose piece**: Keeps the halter on the face of the animal; goes over the bridge of the animal’s nose approximately one inch below the eyes. Pressure points on top of the nose causes your animal to move backward. Be careful because sore/rub spots can form here.

**Adjustment loop**: Allows the halter to be adjusted smaller or larger and allows the halter to ‘fit”; it should be on the right side of the head. Pressure points under the loop causes the animal to turn.

**Chin rope or strap**: Keeps the halter from coming off the nose; goes under the animal’s chin and cheek area, is made of rope or chain. Pressure points under the chin rope cause the animal to move forward. Chain straps are found on show halters and are used if you need more pressure after the animal has been trained to lead. Jerking on the chain is strongly discouraged because it causes more harm than good.

**Eye Loop**: Holds the lead of the halter and is located on the left side of the head.
**Lead**: Is used to tie up and hold onto the animal; is located on the left side of the animal’s cheek. The lead is used to provide pressure on all pressure points found on the animal’s head.

Halter breaking is teaching your animal to respond to pressure. Applying pressure with the halter causes your animal to move so that the pressure is released. The release of constant pressure is the reward that teaches your animal to lead.

There are three main halter types.

**Rope type halter**: Made with three strand nylon or sisal rope. A rope halter is used for the initial halter breaking because rope does not pinch the animals. Caution should be taken when using the nylon rope because it is slippery and hard to hold onto when tying the animal for the first time. Wearing gloves is recommended when using this rope. Leads can be different lengths. Having a short lead when halter breaking for the first time can make it difficult to tie up. Too long of leads can be dangerous as you or your calf can get tangled in the rope. A good length for the lead for cattle is 12 to 14 feet. For lambs the lead is 4 to 6 feet.

**Show type halter**: Made of leather or nylon material and has a chain chin strap. One to two weeks before your show you should introduce the show halter and practice with it. Some animals don’t like the chain feeling and must get used to it. The chain adds more pressure and with that comes more response from your animal. If your animal cannot absolutely work with the chain strap you could cover it with vet wrap.

**Horse type halter**: This halter should never be used for cattle because it does not provide the pressure points to aid in the animal learning to walk when pressure is applied to the points.