**Re: Halter training calves-again!** <http://www.lifestyleblock.co.nz/vforum/showthread.php?t=26740>

So at least two, so forgive me if I am repeating this but there maybe lots of lurkers who want to know too!
Thanks Andrea for you kind words, we like them too, that's why we have been breeding them since 1979!

So to answer a couple of questions first-blimeyvicki, what kind of a halter have you got? I have a variety of halters and over the years have settled on one type that suits our methods best. Other experienced folks may do this completely differently-but this way works for us!

Why not try to handle all 3 and teach them to tie up? I find that if the animals have been haltered and will tie up it is so much easier-and safer for anything you might have to handle them for in the future. A lot of you want to milk a house cow-OK she might not need to be tied up, but the experience of you being close and handling her pays dividends when she calves and you first try to milk her.

Palmycol, yes now is the time to start working with your heifer-the smaller the better but up to 18 months should still be attainable. Now as to breed-I would say Angus dairy cross, the only other breed starting with A is Ayrshire-and they are red and white with horns! She is fine boned so I'm picking Jerseyx Angus or even Ayrshire X Angus. The one white leg gives her away as being a cross of some sort. Is she polled or dehorned. If she is polled naturally then I'm picking there is an Angus in there somehwere-or a Lowline, or at a pinch Dexter-but that doesn't start with A!

Lets start at the beginning-halters!


I like the halters with a slip lower nose band, so when they pull it tightens, and when they stop it drops loose. Horse/pony webbing halters are great in that they cannot slip them over the ear, due to the throat bands, but the pull comes from behind the ears-and they can pull on this all day, but they are fine to leave on them in the paddock though, so you can catch them easily again.

Rope slip halters are OK, they can be made to fit various sizes, but they tend tighten up and not slacken off. Also if they get wet they tighten up and are hard to loosen, and if you tie a knot near the head to stop it slipping undone-that can pull so tight you will never get it undone again.

Tying up! Use a quick untie knot like this-you just pull the loose end and it comes free, pull the animal end and it tightens up. You will find there are plenty of times when you need to get it untied quickly!

Use a long rope-at least 2 metres, to start with, never put a loop on the end which you are tempted to put your hand through-just a knot to stop it when it runs through the hand! Get the softest rope you can find if you make your own lead ropes! When you tie them up make sure the rope is tied high enough they cannot get a leg over it, but allow enough length so they can lie down, or if they fall over don't strangle!

I had the halters we use made by the local saddler. You can buy them from farm stores and places like Shoof, but they tend not to be quite so robust. I like the straps to fit on to rings either side of the nose. The ones you can buy from Shoof are just sewn together at this point and do not fit quite as well-I'll try and post photos of the difference.
no side ring

You really should have yards with a race that you canfirst put the halter on the animal while it is closely confined and you can get close safely.

Lesson one, bring the animal into the yard/race/shed speak quietly, give it a rub and a scratch and pop the halter on quickly. Depending on the reaction, tighten it up, give another scratch (around the tail is a favourite spot) and leave it standing there.


Next day, repeat putting on the halter, attach the rope and tie up, still while the animal is confined-repeat scratches and rubs and release.

Day 3, repeat halter and lead rope, maybe attach another rope and let animal into a wider space-it will probably take a run, so be prepared to anchor the rope to a post and stand clear! Talk quietly, offer some hay or a scratch but be aware it might leap around, fall over, turn somersaults or just pull back all the time.

Repeat the above till the animal will quietly walk to a post to be tied up-it may need some encouragement from behind to walk on. A push or a twist of the tail by a helper is all it should need!

Continue this daily if possible, once it is calm enough to get near and brush-without leaping about touch it all over, down the legs, round the udder-or other if a bull or a steer! They really like being groomed and scratched. If you do this often enough-and lead them within the confines of a yard or very small area and give them food and leave them tied up for an hour or so each day-hopefully with company-this process should only take 2 weeks tops.
It really depends on the animal, your quiet confident manner and the time you are able to spend.
Because we put our calves in the yards at 6am for the cows to come and feed them, we tie them up afterwards and work on them when they are full and relaxed. Because T. is now back at work we are tending to work on them in the evenings on weekdays now, after their tea when it is cooler. We tie the lot up, then walk them one at a time. Just this week we have been tying flappy ribbons around the halters, waving a sweatshirt or sack over their backs or heads and leaving an object flapping on the fence where they are tied. It only takes one days introduction and the next they accept whatever the previous days lesson was!

You will notice some of the pictures the animals-both male and female have spring loaded nose clips. These clip in and out of their noses, having bulbous ends which do not quite meet. These days most shows insist that females must be led in public with nose clips and bulls over 1 year must have a permanent ring through the nose. We now use them for training right from the start on the calves-they don't take long to get used to them and they are there as a brake only! You shouldn't have to put any pressure on the nose. If they try to get away the pressure usually stops them. Cattle that want to escape tend to put their heads down and run-if this happens and they get loose you will have great difficulty holding them in the future-they try it on because it works! Never let them get the better of you!

I've probably said enough for one post-there are heaps more hints, but feel free to ask questions and we'll add to the lesson in the next post.

Some of the photos are old ones from previous training sessions.
This is a bit of history-Dandelion when she was first broken in Jan 2009 and in Feilding last March being Shown-note the very loose chain under her chin-that is a show halter where the chain gives a bit more control and pressure when tight-but drops away completely if they are not pulling. The nose brake is there too!


Here are some of this mornings photos with the current batch-now walking quite happily in the open spaces!


The fourth week of training has ended with a practice load on and off the float, in readiness for an early morning start next Saturday when they will be off to their first show.
These photos were taken of last years training mob!


The training over the last week has involved daily walks into wide open spaces and introducing them to a few new experiences-flapping ribbons in their faces, radio, extra people and the dog, hanging around and today, getting on to the float.



For young animals with no experience of walking on anything but grass-or mud-the experience has got to be scary! Walking into a confined space, with sloping wooden ramp under their feet and the odd bang and creak!

After a few years trial and error we let them take it slowly, sniff the ramp first, have a look inside and gently coax them up. Putting an experienced one on first encourages the newbies to walk in beside, then take the first one out and replace with another novice! Having had to do this with 9 took a little time.
But having done this before, when it comes to the rush to get loaded for the Show-and then the return trip home, being loaded at the Showgrounds, the 2nd time usually goes fairly smoothly.

The lesson is to introduce new experiences quietly and calmly and one at a time. They usually accept it the next time without too much drama!

Reminder that these are all still on their mothers, so they are being very brave doing it without Mum to encourage, or bellow a warning! The cows are all in another paddock, filling their faces and bellies, without a care for what is happening to their babies!

Here are some photos taken at tea time!


**Re: Halter training calves-again!**

Firstly, Palmycol, sorry I missed this post-I must have been busy with the Show.
Yes, we will be at Manfield Best Of Beef-I've just put our entries in! Taking 6-silly us, but a different pair each day! Will look forward to meetng you if you manage to call by. StuR will be somewhere abouts the beef cattle too no doubt.

Valmai, I would start training your heifers as soon as you get them. The younger they are the better. For a small Jersey calf a foal halter is OK. A pony halter would probably fit a yearling heifer and upwards. I find horse halters are good on some cows but some tend to be too short over behind the ears and under the throat, and too long in the cheek so the nose band drops off.

Actually a slip halter, webbing type ones that you can get from Farm stores like RD1 or Farmlands with a lead rope is best I find. They stock them for calf club calves.

Check out our photos, that is what we use now, even though I have a selection of horse halters and rope ones. I like the slip halters with both the nose and side straps fitting into a ring on both sides, not stitched. They are easy to put on, tighten up under their chin when you pull and slacken off when they stop pulling-which rewards them! The rope ones, even the vet rope ones tend to stay tight when pulled on and released. The rope ones made out of hemp stuff tighten up when wet and can be hard to get off again, and if you tie a knot almost impossible to untie when wet!

You can't leave slip halters on all the time-not that you really need to leave a halter on them all the time-just in case they get hooked up on a branch or fence. The soft 'vet rope' types are fine too, or the synthetic rope ones-but be wary of the hard nylon type rope ones when you are training, they can give you a nasty rope burn if they pull through your hand quickly! Look at the Shoof online catalogue, it has a range of halters for cattle.

You still need one with a short nose band for a calf, (the piece which fits across the top of the nose from side to side. The piece which goes under the chin and out as the lead rope is extenable to any size os course. Then you will need a larger one for your yearling and older, so although they expand you probably need two.

As for getting them used to people-yes that is the hardest thing-especially if you want to show them. There is nothing like the first Show to introduce them to noise, people and especially children! I find children probably the hardest as they are small, noisy and brightly coloured and make sudden unexpected movements which can be quite scary! You can take a radio out to a training session, tie some balloons on the fence-wear bright flappy clothes, take some visitors to walk around them etc-but a public outing is a great education!

If you are only keeping a House Cow and don't intend to Show, or give demonstrations etc then just getting them used to as many strange noises and experiences at home is sufficient.