



Beef Cattle: Keeping a Small-Scale Herd for Pleasure and Profit (Hobby Farms)

Ann Larkin Hansen

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Hobby Farms Beef Cattle: Keeping a Small-Scale Herd for Pleasure and Profit, written by Ann Larkin Hansen, serves as an excellent introduction to raising cows for food or simply to graze while mowing and fertilizing the pasture. This colorful guide offers experienced hobby farmers and beginners all of the essential information necessary to purchase and maintain a small herd of beef cattle. While managing her own hobby farm in Wisconsin, Hansen shares her expertise in all things farm and has authored numerous books such as Making Hay, The Organic Farming Manual, and Finding Good Farmland. In this comprehensive book, Hansen corrals the hobby farmer into the world of cowboys and cowgirls: she begins, “Beef cattle are as much at home on the hobby farm as they are on the range.” This colorful primer begins with the basics, from biological traits and breeds to behavior and life cycle, and describes exactly what’s required for a hobby farmer to maintain a herd of cattle—the four F’s—fencing, feed, fields, and facilities. Given the expense involved in the purchase and maintenance of beef cattle, all hobby farmers will welcome Hansen’s sound and sensible advice on buying the right cattle, whether steer calves for meat or breeding stock for building up a herd. The buying chapter helps farmers focus on what to look for when selecting cattle; how cows, heifers, and bulls are priced; where to purchase; and how to get cattle to your farm. The feeding and nutrition of cattle is a complicated topic, and Hansen breaks it down into the three basic components that every keeper needs to understand: pasture, hay, and grain. With directness and clarity, she explains the ins and outs of grazing, selecting ideal foodstuffs, using salt and minerals, and maintaining good weight on the herd. The reader can rely on her expert advice to learn the fundamentals of handling cattle, including herding, loading, and transporting cattle, as well as keeping beef cattle healthy through preventive methods, vaccinations, parasite control and veterinary assistance. For hobby farmers planning to breed their livestock, Beef Cattle includes a chapter on pairing cows and heifers, the actual breeding, artificial insemination, the care of pregnant cows, calving, caring for the young, and weaning calves. The final chapter of the book “Marketing and Processing Your Cattle” is geared toward hobby farmers looking to get beef processed, grade meat, and sell the final product. Sidebars of fun trivia, stories from farmers, and useful advice appear throughout the handbook. A glossary of over 100 terms; an appendix of health issues; a resource section of useful websites, books, and periodicals; and a detailed index complete the book.

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