

# Hutt FFA

## Cattle

### Exhibitor Handbook

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## **Purpose**

**The purpose of this handbook is to assist you in successfully raising a beef cattle project. The information contained in the following pages will act as a guideline. Some of the statements may not pertain to your project since both market and breeding cattle are covered. It must be understood that this material is not the only information you will need to raise your animal, but it does cover the most common aspects of the project. Refer to this handbook often. Should any questions arise concerning your project, don't hesitate to contact your project advisor for help.**

**Good luck on your endeavor of raising a beef project. With hard work and dedication, your project will be a success!**

## **What You Should Know**

### **Before Buying a Beef Project**

- 1. A beef project can be a very exciting and rewarding experience or a very frustrating and discouraging project depending on the amount of time and energy you put into the project.**
- 2. The duration of a beef project can range from 8 months for a market steer to a year-**

round project for breeding cattle. It is important that as much attention be given your project during the last months as is given during the first months.

3. Progress and change of a beef project is slow and sometimes tedious. However, with patience and persistence, your time spent with your project will pay off. Consequently, any lapse in working with your animal, changes in the feeding schedule, etc. will slow progress down or even reverse it. Raising cattle is not a hit or miss proposition, you must be consistent in how you raise your animal. Achieving maximum results requires maximum input from you. In other words, you get out of your project what you put into it.

4.

It is critical that a person understands that the animal will be dependent on you for every aspect of its well-being including feed, water, shelter, health, exercise, etc. You must be willing to provide for each of these areas on a daily basis for the duration of the project.

## **Getting Ready for Your Beef Project**

1. Have your pen prepared before receiving your beef project. The pen should meet the following requirements:

You should purchase your feed, hay, and a trace mineral salt block 1 - 2 days prior to receiving your animal.

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## **Purchasing Your Animal**

1. There are different ways to purchase a beef project. No one way is right or wrong. You need to determine what is best for you in terms of your budget and willingness to work with your animal. The most common ways of buying an animal are:

2.

**A. Purchasing your animal from a ranch. Usually the cost of the animal is less when purchased this way. However, the animal may not be halter broken, vaccinated or wormed. On the positive side, there is usually a set price and you are not in direct competition with others to buy the animal, and there may be a larger group of animals to select from.**

**B. Purchasing your animal through an auction. Usually the cost of the animal is greater when purchased this way. The positive points of purchasing this way are that the animal is probably halter broken, has been vaccinated and wormed, and usually started on grain. The downside of this type of purchase is that several people may be bidding against you for the animal which will raise the price, and these animals are usually groomed which can make them appear to look better than they really are.**

**You need to determine how much you can afford to spend on the initial cost of the animal. With time and patience, above average animals can be found for starting at \$1500. Very high quality animals sold through an auction can cost upwards of \$10,000.**

or more.

**3. Whichever way you choose to purchase your animal, make sure that you consult with your project advisor prior to buying it. You must obtain a brand inspection and bill of sale from the seller, and registration papers for breeding animals. These papers must be presented to the fair upon arrival to be eligible to show and/or sell your animal.**

1.

## **Starting Off Right**

**As soon as you get your animal home, it is imperative that you observe your animal** closely for any signs of illness. Generally, if cattle are hauled a long distance, the chance of illness is greater than those hauled short distances. Signs to watch for include runny eyes and/or nose, droopy head, and inactivity. It will take a few days for the animal to acclimate itself to its new surroundings.

2. **Your animal may not want to eat the first day or two. This is normal. However, if it is not eating by the third day, you should contact your advisor. To minimize the chance of digestive problems, start by feeding only free-choice oat hay for the first two days. On the third day, if it is eating regularly, start providing grain and cut back on the hay. (Refer to section on feeding for additional information.)**

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3.

**Halter breaking as early as possible is important. The quicker the animal can be gentled down through halter breaking and leading, the quicker it will start to gain weight at an acceptable rate. It is much easier to halter break and teach a smaller animal to lead than a larger one. DON'T WAIT! (Refer to the section on halter breaking for more information.)**

## **Feeding Your Beef Project**

1. **Nutrition is the single most important aspect of raising a quality beef project. Consistency is the key word when feeding cattle with regards to the type of feed, amount of feed, and feeding schedule. A proper feeding program can make the difference between a high quality animal and a poor quality animal.**

2.

**One of the most overlooked elements of a good feeding program is water. The water**

**your animal drinks should be fresh, clean, and cool at all times. A beef animal will drink 7 - 12 gallons of water per day on the average; a little more in the summer and a little less in the winter. Dirty or stagnant water can have an affect on the health of your animal. The water trough should be cleaned on a regular basis, preferably daily. A good rule of thumb on water is that if you wouldn't drink it, your animal probably wouldn't drink it either if given a choice.**

**3. Feed should be fed by WEIGHT and not by volume. Different feeds in the same container will weigh different amounts. A three pound coffee can is NOT three pounds of feed. A beef animal should be fed an amount of feed equal to 2 - 3% of its body weight per day. For example, a 600 pound animal should be fed 12-18 pounds of feed per day. The actual amount will depend on the type of feed being fed. It is important to know exactly how much you are feeding so that accurate average daily gains can be calculated. This information will tell you whether YOU are on track to meet the desired projected weight for your animal.**

**4. Another critical aspect of a good feeding program is setting feeding times in the morning and evening and sticking to them. There should be no more than a 15 minute variation in feeding times from day to day. Drastic changes in the feeding times can have an adverse effect on your animal in terms of appetite and health.**

**5. Whenever a new feed or increase in feed is introduced, the change should be made gradually over a period of time. When you get your animal home, it should be fed free choice hay. A grower ration of grain can be started on the second or third day at the rate of two pounds fed in two equal feedings. Some animals will not eat the grain at first. If your animal does not start eating the grain by the second day of feeding it, contact your advisor. Once the animal begins to eat the grain, increase it at the rate of one pound per day until the desired amount is reached. The amount of hay being fed should be cut back in proportion to the increase in grain. Certain brands of grain do not require hay to be fed once the animal is on full feed.**

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**6. Make sure that the animal is eating all the grain at each feeding. Feed that is not consumed by the next feeding should be removed and the amount fed should be reduced in proportion to the amount left over. Increase the amount any time the feed is completely consumed by the next feeding, but increases should be limited to one**



pound per day.

7.

**If your animal goes off feed for more than one day, contact your advisor immediately. Generally, lack of appetite is one of the first signs of illness. The sooner the illness is detected, the easier it is to treat. Any type of illness will cause a decrease in the daily gain and could affect the desired end weight.**

**8. Approximately 90 - 120 days before the fair, you will need to start feeding a finisher ration to your animal. The grower ration helps to develop frame and muscle, where the finisher will help to add finish or condition. The change to the finisher ration should be done gradually by substituting one pound of finisher for one pound of grower per day. Increase the substitution at this rate until full feed of the finisher is accomplished.**

**9. It may be necessary to add a feed supplement to the ration. The supplement will help in increasing growth, appetite, feed efficiency, health, stress resistance, and hair coat growth. Check with your advisor before adding a supplement to your feeding program.**

## **Halter Breaking and Leading Your Beef Animal**

**There are many schools of thought on how to halter break cattle. Halter breaking can be grouped into two main categories: "Praise and reward" which reinforces positive actions or "Negative" which uses punishment to counter negative actions of the animal. The positive approach does not have the immediate impact of the other method, but over the course of time has a longer lasting and consistent effect on the animal. The key is to work quietly and consistently with your animal to minimize stress for you and the animal.**

**Halter breaking should start as soon as possible while the animal is still small. The animal must understand that you are in charge. You decide how it will walk, when it will stop, how it will stand, etc. Once an animal knows that it has the**

upper hand, it will take considerably more time to train it to do what you want.

**3. The proper equipment is as important as technique. An adjustable rope halter made of 1/2" or 5/8" nylon with a long lead is best. It should be placed high on the face and close to the eyes to prevent slippage, give maximum control, and minimize possible injury to the animal.**

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**4. If your animal has been halter broken prior to buying it, you can start tying it up**

5.

**immediately. If it has not been halter broken, let the animal drag the lead rope for two or three days. The animal will learn to "give" to the pressure as it repeatedly steps on the rope.**

**On the third or fourth day you need to begin tying up the animal. Always use a show stick to snare the lead rope. Using the show stick will make it easier and safer to pick up the rope. Tie the animal to a stout post at eye level about 12 inches away. Tying the animal higher or lower could cause injury to the spine or legs. Keep the animal tied for a short duration of 15 - 20 minutes the first few times. As soon as the animal "gives" to the halter or wears out, turn it loose. Release the animal calmly and don't let it jerk the rope from your hands. Creating a situation of early respect will be rewarded later.**

**6. Begin touching the animal as soon as possible with a show stick. Rubbing the animal with the show stick allows you to be further away and is less intimidating. Start touching the animal with your hands as soon as possible. Stand as close to it as you can.**

**Be firm, but use slow, deliberate movements. The animal can sense whether you are calm or scared and will respond accordingly.**

**7. When teaching the animal to lead, a "pull, release, and reward" method works best. Apply gentle pressure on the lead rope to get the animal to move. In the beginning, accept only a few steps as progress and reward by releasing pressure on**

**the halter and speak to the animal. Voice reward is very important. Again, it is important to be calm and patient.**

**8.**

**Rinse the animal with water as soon as it is controllable. Rinsing seems to take the rest of the fight out of the animal and will prevent some later kicking problems.**

**9. Following the initial halter breaking, always tie the animal with its head up high to teach it to stand with its head up and its legs under it properly. If possible when working with your animal, turn a radio on loudly near your animal. The loud music will help your animal become accustom to noises that are common at fairs and shows.**

**10. Once the animal can be caught and led consistently, remove the halter after you are finished working with it. Until it is possible to do this, regularly check the halter to see that it is properly adjusted and not cutting into the animal's nose. A cut caused by the halter can go undetected for a long period of time, but is very painful for the animal and can easily become infected. By haltering the animal only when working with it will eliminate or greatly reduce the chance of this problem occurring.**

**11. Begin training your animal to stand properly by using the show stick as soon as possible. The legs should be placed squarely under the animal. The time spent training the animal to stand correctly will pay off in the show ring.**

**6**

**12. It is important to work with your animal on a regular basis, not only to train it, but**

**to exercise it as well. Never hit your animal. Animals respond better to trust than to fear, and will be more willing to work for you. Your animal will not learn how to lead and stand correctly on its own, you must teach it how.**

## **Training and Care of the Hair Coat**

**A good hair coat is critical to successful fitting, but unfortunately is over-looked or neglected until it is too late. A good hair coat that is properly trained and clipped will enhance the strong points and de-emphasize the weak points of the animal when shown. A poor hair coat does not give you this flexibility. Since there is no such thing as the "perfect" animal, it is important to use every technique possible to make your animal look its best. Training and care of the hair coat should begin as soon as you acquire your project and continue on a regular basis (preferably daily) until the animal is sold or will no longer be shown. Care for the animal's hair as you would your own hair.**

**2. The process of training and care of the hair coat involves rinsing, conditioning, and brushing. When using soap to wash your animal, use a mild soap and rinse it out thoroughly. A liquid dish soap works very effectively and is less expensive than livestock soaps. Wash with soap only when it is absolutely necessary. Overuse of soap will create dry skin and hair.**

**3. Rinse your animal with water on a regular basis. Using a high pressure nozzle with allow you to rinse the dirt out more efficiently and penetrate the hair so that the skin is rinsed as well. It is important to remove the dirt and not just wet the animal. Start by rinsing the animal's back and working down the sides of the animal. Be sure to rinse the underline, legs, and head as well.**

**4.**

**5.**

**After the animal has been rinsed, brush the hair dry. This process is time consuming, but is the only practical way to train the hair. Use a multi-tooth plastic brush and apply enough pressure to brush to the skin. This practice will not only train the hair, but also even out rough fat deposits. The body should be brushed forward at a 45 degree angle from the underline to the back. The legs should be brushed straight**

**up from the hoof to the flank area. The rump should be brushed straight across from the center to the outside. It is not necessary to brush the head or underline. Cowlicks require more brushing than the rest of the hair and can be straightened out over a period of time by brushing.**

**Once the hair is dry, it is necessary to condition it as repeated rinsing will cause the hair to dry out. Mix one part hair conditioner to two parts water in a spray bottle. Liberally apply the conditioner to the hair. Thoroughly brush in the conditioner to the skin using a rice root brush. Before using a rice root brush for the first time, soak it in water for 20 - 30 minutes to soften it. Soaking will prevent the bristles from breaking. Once the conditioner has been brushed in, finish combing the hair with a scotch comb.**

7.

### **General Rules for Hutto FFA Fair Exhibitors**

**Student's Name  
(print)**

**5. FFA members are required to obtain their homework from all their teachers in advance of missing school for attending fairs.**

**6. Each exhibitor must read and understand the rules and regulations in the WCLA's premium book or any major they will attend.**

**10. Each exhibitor is required to serve barn duties as assigned and specified by the Project advisor.**

**13. Market animal exhibitors are required to write thank you letters to their buyers.**

**14. All exhibitors must attend assigned meetings by the project advisor unless prior arrangements have been made.**

**15. The advisor of any species will have the authority to take whatever disciplinary action necessary toward any student that fails to comply with the rules.**

**Your signature below verifies that you have read, discussed, understand, and agree to abide by these rules. Please sign and return this form to the project advisor. If you have any questions at any time, please feel free to contact the advisor at the Hilmar Ag Department (667-8366).**

**Parent  
Signature**

**Date**

**Student  
Signature**

**Date**

**Student's Name (please  
print\_**

### **Hutto FFA Beef Exhibitor Rules**

1.

#### **Daily Activities**

**A. Spend time with your beef animal, observe, exercise, rinse, and brush it.**

**B. Check the feeder and make sure it is clean and dry. Feed twice a day at scheduled times.**

**C. Thoroughly clean the pen.**

2.

#### **Periodic Activities**

**A. Attend scheduled project meetings.**

**B. Be at your project site when the advisor checks your animal.**

3.

#### **Activities Prior to the Fair**

**A. Find a buyer for your animal.**

**B. Clip your animal approximately 2-3 days prior to the fair.**

**A. Exhibitors are expected to be at the fair for the purpose of caring for and preparing their animal for show.**

**C. Exhibitors must be in the beef barn no later than the time announced by the advisor and must participate in the daily morning clean-up, feeding, and meeting. Exhibitors must also participate in the evening feeding and meeting at the time announced by the advisor. Late exhibitors will be assigned an additional barn duty for each infraction.**

**D. Each exhibitor is responsible to rinse/wash and brush their animal(s) EVERY day of the fair.**

**E. Cattle must be regularly checked throughout the day by their owner.**

**F. Exhibitors must serve scheduled barn duties which includes being on time, keeping the cattle, pens, aisles, and tack areas clean and watering all cattle at**

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least once during the shift. Each infraction of these responsibilities will result in an additional barn duty..

**G. All exhibitors are required to be present on weigh day.**

**H. On show days, all exhibitors are required to stay in the barn area for the duration of the beef show.**

**K. All exhibitors are required to work together, follow all instructions from the advisor, and cooperate with a POSITIVE ATTITUDE.**

**M. At the conclusion of the fair, each exhibitor will be required to write a thank you letter to the buyer(s) of his/her animal, the breeder of their animal, and pay any remaining money owed to Hilmar FFA before receiving his/her auction check.**



1. Disciplinary Procedures

**A. A "Three Strike" discipline system is used by the Hilmar FFA advisors. Any student failing to fulfill the obligations of the project in accordance to the rules and guidelines set forth by the project advisor will receive a "strike". Infractions include, but are not limited to, missing a project meeting/weigh day without prior notice, neglect of animal (not feeding on time, pen not cleaned, etc.), failure to perform required duties before and/or during the fair. Once a student has received three strikes, he/she forfeits his/her privilege to show with Hilmar FFA.**

**B. Other disciplinary problems may result in the removal of exhibitor and animal from the school farm (if housed there) or fair, withdrawal of animal from the fair livestock auction, and/or loss of showing privileges with Hilmar FFA for one or more years.**

**Your signature below verifies that you have read, discussed, understand, and agree to abide by these rules. Please sign and return this form to the project advisor. If you have any questions at any time, please feel free to contact the advisor at the Hilmar Ag Department (667-8366).**

**Parent  
Signature**

**Date**

**Student  
Signature**

**Date**

**Exhibitor (print)**

## Showing Cattle

The  
purpose

of showmanship is to present **an animal** in a manner that will develop **the** most favorable impression **on the judge**. Showing **beef steers and heifers properly is an important part** of your beef project and **an** extremely rewarding experience. **Beef** cattle showmanship **not only generates enthusiasm** and **competi- tion within the showing, but also teaches other valuable** lessons that can be applied to everyday **life. These** lessons include accept- ing responsibility, winning graciously, losing with dignity, **and** learning the amount of work and determination it takes to **become a winner**.

### Where To Start

Success **in** showmanship begins **at** home. **Good** showmanship **isn't** difficult, but **it** does take patience and effort. **It takes time to halter break your animal so that it is** responsive to your hand movements **on the** show halter, **or, to a showstick. Your** heifer **or steer should be trained to walk, stop and be** set up **easily** and quickly when com- manded. Make **sure your** animal **is well-accustomed** to being handled **with both** a show halter **and a showstick prior** to entering **the** ring. **In addition,** your **animal** should **also** be accustomed **to handling** by another person. The judge will then be able to perform **a close** inspection without interruption or fear of injury. **In pre- paring for** a show, **practice** often **with** your animal **in several short** periods rather **than just a few** long, **drawn-out practice sessions. Using The Halter**

Once your **animal has** been halter broken, it should be **taught to** stop and lead **with its head** up in a **natural and attentive position**. Rope **halters** may **be** used until **approximately two** weeks before a **show**. At **that time** a show **halter** should **be** substituted frequently. When **leading,** **hold the halter strap** in your right hand, **6 to 12 inches away**

from **the animal's head** (usually at the junction of the chain and leather portion of the show strap). Most animals will not lead well or behave if the halter is held closer. Since an animal normally moves its head before any other portion of the body, a firm hold on the halter will give you better control and often prevent any wayward foot movement.

When leading, any extra strap may be folded and held within the right hand, or the extra length may be held in the left hand. The latter method is preferred because you can better control a spooked animal when you have two hands on the strap. Do not, however, invite injury by wrapping the halter strap around your fingers or hand. Many participants shorten the leather strap so it needs no folding and hangs free.

## Using The Showstick

The showstick is used to:

assist in placing the feet

■keep the topline straight calm the animal

control the animal

When setting up, switch the lead strap to your left hand, and the showstick to your right. If a hind foot is to be moved backward, pull backward on the halter and simultaneously apply pressure with your showstick to the soft tissue where the hoof is split; but, avoid jabbing this tender spot. When the hind foot is to be moved forward, pull forward on the halter and apply pressure with the showstick under the dew claw. When the hind feet are too close together, apply pressure with the showstick to the inside of the leg just above the hoof.

Front feet may be repositioned using either a showstick or boots. Younger, inexperienced, showmen will be safer using a showstick. While pulling or pushing on the halter, simultaneously apply pressure to the dew claw to move the hoof forward or to the split of the hoof to move it backward or sideways. Through practice, you will become very proficient at setting up your animal quickly, quietly, and safely.

The showstick will also help keep the animal's topline straight. Simply apply pressure to the underline or place the hook of the stick inside the rear flank and apply slight pressure.

When training your animal, tie its head to a high rail or post. Practice setting up by using your showstick and occasionally stroking the animal's underline as you place

the hooves. This calms your animal and gains acceptance of your showstick. Finally, the showstick will help to keep your animal from moving too rapidly while being led. When leading, hold the showstick in the left hand about one-third of the way down from the butt end. This will permit good control of the showstick and allow you to use the butt end of the showstick for tapping the nose, when needed.

## In The Showring

### Entering and Setting Up

After your animal is thoroughly groomed and outfitted, prepare to enter the showring. Be prompt, alert, neatly dressed, but not overdressed. Dirty clothes, sneakers, or lack of personal cleanliness will detract from the impression you and your animal make on the judge. Be certain you have your exhibitor number, showstick, and a Scotch or black rubber comb for re-grooming your animal in the ring. Also, you must know the birthdate and weight of your animal.

Lead your animal into line and set it up as quickly as possible. Generally, cattle will be lined up side by side to start a class. When pulling into line or stopping, always try to leave three or four feet on both sides of your animal. In this way you have enough room to set up and others will have ample room for movement. Avoid setting up in a low spot or with the front feet in a hole; try to put the front feet on higher ground. Also, leave at least five feet between your animal's head and the edge of the ring. This will allow room for the judge to move in front of the row. Keep yourself in a position to watch both your animal and the judge. Winning beef showmen always keep their animal's legs placed correctly, the head up and the back level.

When lining up head to tail, allow four to six feet between animals. If the animal in front is reluctant to move, tap it gently on the rump with the showstick or twist the tail to help get it started. Let your animal walk freely. Tap your animal on the nose with the showstick if walking too fast.

Train your animal to stop by lifting its head. Normally, the result will be placement of the animal's front feet squarely under each corner of the body. Position the front feet first, if needed; then proceed with the hind feet. Due to the manner in which the animal walks, one hind foot is likely to be placed incorrectly and in need of re-positioning.

**Set the hind legs making sure that each leg is placed squarely under each corner of the body. Keep the animal's back level and its head up. Slowly stroke the animal's underline with the hook of the show-stick to calm it and keep the top level. Do not "saw" the animal by pushing the stick back and forth rapidly. If the animal is high in the loin apply pressure to the loin with a fingernail or the hook of the showstick to level out the top. When leading off, switch the lead strap back to the right hand and the showstick to the left hand. Use patience when your animal is contrary and difficult to set up. Many times, especially when being viewed from the side, it is best to pull out of line, make a clockwise turn, and start over.**

## **During The Class**

Watch the judge and ringman for directions and respond promptly. In showmanship contests, direct most of your attention to the judge for instructions. The judge will expect you to be familiar with the proper way to move your animal from one place to another. The following illustrations demonstrate the most common procedure in a class of eight animals.

**Normally, cattle are turned to the right or in a clockwise manner. The exceptions are small classes or showrings. Some judges prefer that you back an animal out of line when moving to a different position. This speeds up the show. When the ring is small and the line is near the rail, you have no choice. Simply back out of line and go to the indicated position.**

**By being very alert as to when and where the judge wants you to stop, you will be able to anticipate how you can best position your animal. Again, leave three or four feet on each side when pulling into line or four to six feet in front when lining up head to tail. Stay in line with the other animals.**

**Do not look only at the judge. The old saying "keep one eye on the judge and one eye on the animal" is very appropriate. Most important, see that your animal is always set up correctly and presented to show its advantages.**

**Close  
Inspection**

**When the judge is viewing your animal, keep its head up, its top level, and alert.** Do not make noises or **rattle the chain on the halter.** **Stand erect but in a comfortable position so that you can check leg placement and move about freely.** When the judge is not viewing **your animal, let it relax but not go to sleep.** **As the judge moves around your animal, move a half step to allow the view he seeks.** **Never step out in front of your animal.** When a **judge handles your steer or heifer, comb the hair back into place after the judge steps back.** **Normally, judges will not handle heifers except in showmanship contests.**

### **Showring Courtesy**

When animals are **lined up head to tail, or side to side, the judge is comparing your animal to the rest of the class.** **If your animal is out of line and covering the view of another animal, the judge cannot make a fair comparison and you are not practicing showring courtesy.** Avoid bumping, crowding **or striking another exhibitor's animal.** Also, do your part to **keep the line straight and allow ample space** between animals. Again, **help your fellow exhibitor if his/her**

**animal is reluctant to move.** **If your animal becomes nervous in the showring, work quietly and patiently with it and remain calm.** Do not **get discouraged or lose your temper.**

**When the judge has announced the final placings, his reasons, and the awards are distributed, leave the ring in an orderly manner following the instructions of the ringman.**

### **Sportsmanshi**

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Congratulate the winners and accept congratulations graciously. Do not become disappointed **if you do not win or rank as high as you think you deserved.** **But remember, there are others in the same class that feel they earned and deserved the honor.** Apply **what you've learned** and be **better prepared for your next showing.**

**Prepared**

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