

A Bottle and a Restrainer



C. 1850 cylindrical "black" glass wine/utility bottle, the rim and neck reinforced with a lead collar. Probably New England. Collection of Chris Havey.



C. 1850 forged iron animal head restraint. Probably New England. Collection of Chris Havey.

These objects—a bottle and a restrainer—are another example of Yankee ingenuity. It's sometime in the 19th century and last night a calf was born, but the mother rejected it. The calf will not live long without nourishment. It also needs the essential antibodies contained in *colostrum*, a secretion found in the mother's milk for only a few days after the calf's birth. You need to collect some of her milk and then dispense it. You could go to Tractor Supply and get a plastic or rubber bottle to feed the calf some formula—but wait a minute, it's 1820, not 2020, and there are no rubber or plastic bottles or ready-made formula available. There are ceramic and glass bottles, but these might crack between a calf's (or foal's, or lamb's, or kid's) jaws. The illustrated objects offer one solution to this problem—an altered bottle and a restrainer. How did it work? First, milk the mother for colostrum. Then have a glass bottle with its neck wrapped in lead for feeding the calf on hand. The lead wrapping will help to stop the calf from breaking the glass bottle. Finally, you might need to immobilize the confused calf's head while presenting the bottle and that is the function of the wrought iron retainer.

Not a lot has been written about such devices. This is another interesting example of Yankee ingenuity and its apparent bottomless ability to "make-do."

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