

Early Weaning May Increase Profits, Rebreeding

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Many cattlemen have always weaned at the same time each season. While this may be profitable for your operation, it may be beneficial to consider weaning calves earlier than the normal 240-270 days of age.

Recent studies are showing that when faced with limited feed supplies, low-quality pastures or special situations, early weaning may allow a practical way to efficiently use feed resources while still obtaining satisfactory calf gains.

Early weaning merits special consideration when you're trying to improve the rebreeding of first-calf heifers. The stresses of lactation, growth, and preparation for rebreeding are especially severe in first-calf heifers, and may result in a conception delay. Nursing delays the female's ability to recycle after calving and early weaning decreases the interval between calving and estrus.

Dr. John Hough, director of education and research for the American Polled Hereford Association, said that early weaning to improve fertility of first-calf heifers

may be done when calves are 35 to 60 days old.

"Studies from Clemson University have shown that 81 percent of heifers whose calves were weaned at 56 days of age calved within the first 30 days of the following calving season. Only 46 percent of heifers subjected to normal weaning calved within the same period," he said.

Early weaning can also make the best use of marginal or lower-quality forage by dry cows. Calves can be put into drylot or fed grain while on pasture to achieve efficient gains. Dry cows can then be placed on lower-quality pasture because their nutrient requirements are lower.

The most critical period for early-weaned calves is the first two weeks after weaning. Calves must overcome the stress of weaning and learn to eat feed very quickly. Hough said palatable feed, good management, and good facilities to reduce stress will decrease any riskiness associated with early weaning.

Don't forget vaccination," Hough said. "At weaning, all

calves should be vaccinated for blackleg and malignant edema. Pasteurella vaccines may also be considered. And it's a good idea to vaccinate a couple weeks prior to weaning so that immunity will be established when the calves are weaned. Your local veterinarian can recommend a vaccination pro-

gram suited to your area."

Calves should be put in a small pen with some type of shelter available. Smaller pens are preferred over larger lots because the larger areas encourage fence walking and make it more difficult to find feed and water.

"The final and most important step of weaning calves early is nu-

trition," Hough said. "A properly balanced ration will get younger calves up and running and discourage any potential problems."

Veterinarians or county extension offices can provide more information about early weaning, nutrition programs, and weaning practices.

Shorthorn Show Names Winners

NEW CASTLE (Lawrence Co.) — Dale and Renee Kennedy of Valencia captured both the grand champions at the recent Pennsylvania State Shorthorn Show with entries from their Keystone Genetics herd.

The show was held in conjunction with the Lawrence County Fair. The entries were judged by Bruce Steitsbath of Ohio.

C F Special Man 69X won the 2-year-old heifer class, senior and grand champion female, which earned the Fred Smalstig Memorial trophy. Later in the day she was selected the supreme champion beef female of the 1992 Lawrence County Fair.

Keystone Drive Rdion won the winter bull calf class, calf champion bull, and grand champion bull. The reserve grand champion bull was the senior champion, G R Dick Tracy ET, a 2-year-old exhibited by the Richard Peoples Family.

Other champion winners included reserve bull calf champion, won by Paul Schneider. Junior champion bull was taken by the Peoples family. Reserve junior champion bull was awarded to an entry from Harold Kennedy's Hills of Home herd. Both the calf champion heifer and the reserve were Keystone Genetic entries.

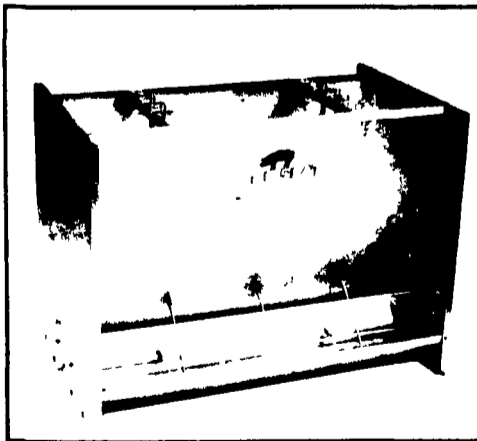
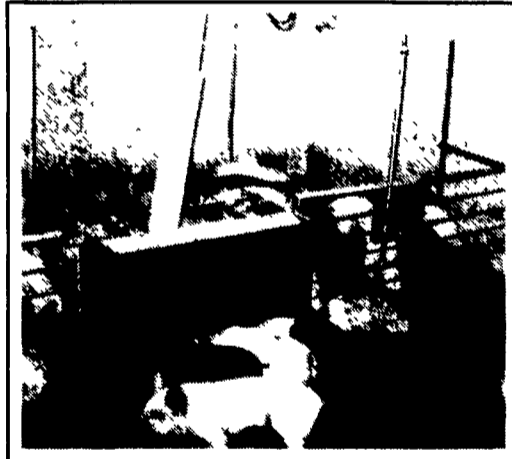
The reserve champion female

was HHF Fancy, an entry of Hively's Highland Farm of New Waterford, Ohio. This heifer had won the summer yearling class and was selected junior champion. The reserve junior champion was another Hively entry, H H F Cover Girl. Reserve senior champion was Keystone Lucy, the second place 2-year-old, a Keystone Genetic entry.

Champion female of the junior show was WBF 9245 5th Ave Baby Doll, an entry of Paul Schneider. Another Paul Schneider entry was the reserve champion. Todd Radzninski won the senior section of the Junior showmanship class.

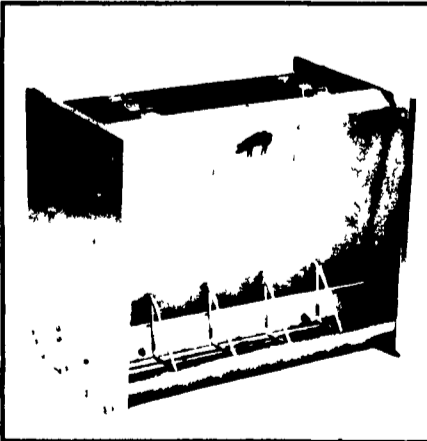
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