

Beef Briefs

by
John Comerford

Penn State Beef Specialist

MANAGING THE CALF UNTIL WEANING

There are some important and profitable practices that can be applied to the beef calf prior to weaning.

While most calves born in the spring are turned out and forgotten until fall, there are some opportunities to increase the value of the calves prior to sale.

The first of these is the "CIT" program. This means castration, implanting, and tagging the calves. There is tremendous economic advantage to castrating male calves, particularly at a young age.

Recent sale reports indicate many weaned feeder calves will be worth up to \$80 per head more as steers compared to bulls. The process is easy, and is best applied when the calf is less than 2 months of age.

Remember, the only way to know whether the job is done right is by removing the testicle through surgical castration. Rubber bands will have up to a 10-15 percent failure rate, and this will contribute to a lower value for your calves in the future.

Growth-promoting implants are one of the few things in the beef business that will almost always make money. Most research shows that implants will increase the value of a weaned calf through heavier weight by 15-20 percent. For a 500-pound calf, that is a return of about \$8 for an implant costing \$1-\$2.

The implants available for young calves are Ralgro, Calfoid, and Synovex-C. There is a host of other products available for older calves with varying effective life.

Two keys to the use of these products are to use proper and approved implanting technique (all implants should be placed in the middle third of the ear between the ear cartilage), and use sanitary conditions to the extent possible to avoid infections at the implanting site.

Bulls that will be used for breeding should never be implanted, but there are some approved implants available for implanting heifers at a very young age. Check the label on all implants to be sure they are the right ones for you to use.

Ear tagging calves for identification, fly control, or both can be done at the same time as castration and implanting. If you have been using insecticidal ear tags in the past, you may want to switch to one of the "new generation" fly tags now available. This change will allow you to keep any resistance from building up after continuous use of a single type of insecticide.

Identification of each calf every year will be most helpful in evaluating cow productivity. This would include calving intervals, calf weaning weights, and in heifer selection. This identification will be essential for any good record-keeping program.

Another practice often considered is creep feeding. For most beef cows, the peak of lactation occurs by 90 days after calving. This implies that about 80 percent of the milk for the lactation will be produced by 3 months after calving, so the calf needs other forms of nutrition.

There are four reasons producers may want to creep-feed calves:

- The price of grain is low relative to the price of cattle

- There is a drought or other condition that results in poor milk production

- To enhance a preconditioning program for feeder calves

- To make more effective use of pastures.

It usually takes about 8-9 pounds of grain to produce a pound of gain in a creep-fed calf. With calves selling for \$.80 per pound, this means the creep feed should not cost more than \$.10 per pound.

The most popular creep feed is oats, so oats would have to cost less than about \$3 per bushel to be cost effective. Other feeds can be used just as easily as oats. One good mix is 60 percent cracked corn, 30 percent whole oats, and 10 percent soybean meal.

If cows are milking well and there is adequate pasture for both cows and calves, prices for feeder calves may be discounted if they are overly fat from grain feeding. However, drought conditions can easily reduce milk production in the cow, so supplemental feeding calves by creep feeding may be an efficient alternative to supplementing cows in dry conditions, particularly after the breeding season.

Preconditioning feeder calves is again gaining popularity as a marketing tool for calf producers. This refers to weaning, vaccinating, and starting calves on feed about 3 weeks prior to marketing them.

Creep feeding is a method for calves to make the transition to grain more easily after weaning. Since they are already accustomed to eating grain, the stress of weaning and changing diets can be reduced.

In rotational pasture systems, calves can be "creep-fed" pasture by allowing them to graze ahead of the cows. This usually allows the

calves access to the best possible forage. It is usually done using a "creep gate" in the fence line, or simply by having paddock division wires raised high enough to allow calves to get under them.

The weight gain will not be as great as with grain feeding, but this is a low-cost way of getting some extra pounds on the calf.

Another alternative scheme is early weaning of calves. Again, this practice has real merit during drought conditions. The lowest nutritional requirements for a beef cow during the year occur for about 60 days after she weans a calf. She should already be bred,

and there is little fetal growth at this stage.

Basically, the cow can do well on a maintenance ration. If there is a lack of forage, a producer may wish to wean calves as early as 120-150 days of age and allow the calves to have access to the best grass or other feeds that are available. Cows can be maintained on poorer quality hay, crop residues, or by-product feeds. Care should be taken to be sure (1) the cows are bred or can be kept in good flesh if the breeding season is not yet completed before reducing the nutritional plane, and, (2) there is not a severe weight reduction in the cows before winter feeding begins.

BUY, SELL, TRADE OR RENT THROUGH THE CLASSIFIED ADS

1a CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT

GENERAL 20-ton Tag-A-Long Air Brakes \$6900, 9-ton \$1995, 1973 IH/DRESSER 100-C Loader ROPS Low Hrs \$9700, 1970 MICHIGAN 35A Pay-loader 4X4 All wheel Steer Cab 1 1/2 yd Gas \$6900, 1987 CASE 580-SE TLB Cab 4X4 Ext-Hoe \$26900, 1975 CASE 580B Tractor/Loader Cab \$5900, 1984 DRESSER 175-C 2 1/2 yd ROPS 2300 hrs \$29900, 1988 KOMATSU D57-S 2 1/2 yd ROPS 1800hrs \$47500/BO, 70 CASE 430 Utility Tractor Gas PS 3pt PTO 1200hrs \$4900, HIAB HD KnuckleBoom \$2995, YORK RW Rake 7' \$475 (609)466-2953

HD 6G Allis Chalmers Front End Loader, Good Condition Firm \$6000 (717)437-2524 Evenings

Homelite Skill Saw, good condition Paul Stoltzfus, 217 S Groffdale, Gordonville, PA 17529

Big Savings on Tires: 14 9x24 \$159, 16 9x24B \$239, 17 5Lx24B 10 ply \$295; 18 4x24B 12 ply \$395; 14 9x26 6 ply \$225; 18 4x26 10 ply \$350; 23 1x26 12 ply \$490; 28Lx26 10 ply \$880; 11 2x28 6 ply \$149; 12 4x28 6 ply \$159; 16 9x28 6 ply \$249; 16 9x30 6 ply \$249; 18 4x30 6 ply \$285; 18 4x34 8 ply \$319; 20 8x34 8 ply \$615; 15 5x38 6 ply \$245; 16 9R38 8 ply \$390; 18 4R38 10 ply \$450; 20 8R38 10 ply \$650; 18 4x38 8 ply \$385; 20 8x38 8 ply \$525 White supply lasts (315)539-2764

Bobcat Loader Model 743 w/backhoe attachment, \$7900. 800/225-7449 York Co

DISMANTLING FOR PARTS Just arrived for parts CAT 922 59A loader w/damaged engine, decent bucket All parts available BALANDA EQUIPMENT PO Box 407 RT 29 Palm, PA 18070 1-800-322-8030

Diesel engine CAT 3406 complete, 380HP, Jake brake, and clutch, completely rebuilt \$6,000 (301)898-7885

Ford 5500 backhoe w/extend-a-hoe, rebuilt engine, asking \$10,900 717-345-4882

Case 680G backhoe, Ser #9136106, rebuilt engine, plumb for hammer, asking \$16,900 717-345-4882

Case 850 Crawler Loader-Motor Rebuilt 200hrs (717)942-6119. \$8000 OBO Trucking Available

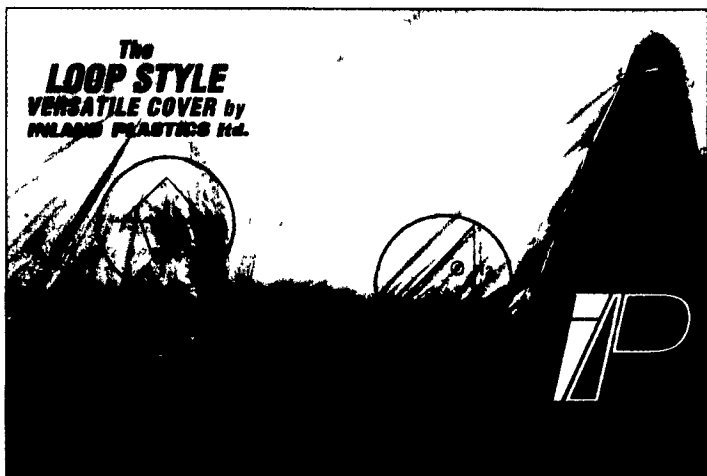
Crawler Loaders: JD 450C turbo clean \$15,950 1985 Case 455C sweeps \$18,900 Ford 340B tractor loader, diesel, 3pth, PTO, \$17,500. 1985 moulder dual drum drive 3-5 ton roller diesel \$8,950. 1986 General 9 ton trl, \$3,500 (610)326-4969.

DON'T LOOK ANY FURTHER!
YOU'LL FIND IT IN LANCASTER FARMING'S CLASSIFIEDS

BALE STACK COVERS

Heavy Duty

- 20 YEARS EXPERIENCE -



FOR PIPE HOLD DOWN

FOR ROPE or PIN HOLD DOWN

2" wide webbing loops (holding over 500 Lbs / loop) sewn into 5 layers of silver / black, U.V.I. treated super tough poly-fabric.

Two spur eyelets each corner in 12" gussets, plus eyelets around perimeter at 3' o/c in 9"; 5 layer gussets (for uneven stacks).

The Versatility You Require in Hold Down Systems!

FOR YOUR NEAREST DEALER CALL:

1 - 800 - 387 - 7765 (USA East)

ZIMMERMAN MFG. CORP.

125 King Court/
Hollander Rd.
New Holland, PA 17557
(717) 354-9611

Contact Us For Literature & Prices!

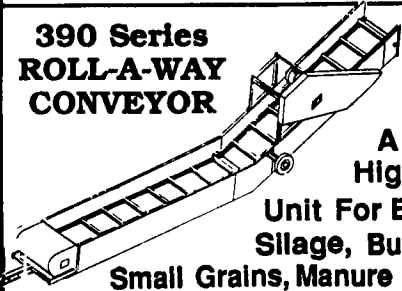
380 SERIES PORTABLE ELEVATORS

A Versatile Economical Elevator For Bales and Ear Corn.



WELL BALANCED, RUGGEDLY BUILT FOR MANY YEARS OF TROUBLE FREE SERVICE

390 Series ROLL-A-WAY CONVEYOR

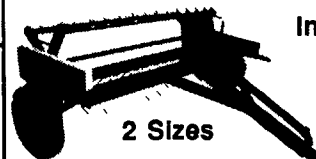


This Is A Rugged High Speed Unit For Ear Corn, Silage, Bulk Feeds, Small Grains, Manure or Bales.

880 SERIES PORTABLE BALE ELEVATOR & MOW CONVEYOR SYSTEM



ZIMMERMAN HEAVY DUTY HAY TEDDER - 790 SERIES



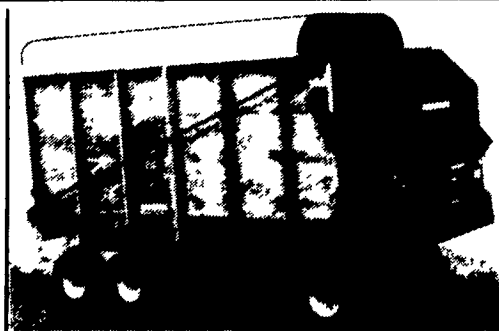
Increase hay crop value with faster drying time...

2 Sizes
7' & 9' Raking Width PTO Drive

UTILITY TRAILERS FRT SERIES



Available in 5000 Thru 10,000 GVW. Other Models 3000 to 24,000 GVW Also Available.



MODEL 990 FORAGE BOX
Hydraulic Drive, Front & Rear Unloading

Rugged, Heavy Duty
ZIMMERMAN WAGON GEAR
Models 6, 8, 10 • And 12, 14.5 Tandem



We Salute The Dairy Farmers For A Job Well Done!