Manager Shares Breeding, Calving, Weaning Expertise

(Continued from Page A39)

since they're calving in a clean environment."

Scours may be transmitted by another calf's manure on the cow's teats.

Weaning

"The biggest thing we try to do with our weaning is to make it as stress-free as possible," said Livingston.

The calves get their first round of vaccines in late January for the fall calves, and the first half of July for the spring calves.

"We come back about a month later and vaccinate the heifer calves for brucellosis and give booster shots to all the calves at that time. When we go to wean, usually it's just a matter of taking weaning weights and worming them — they're not being stressed

other than weaning," he said.
In the past they had penned calves in the feedlot or barnyard area and moved cows of earshot. Although the method worked, "I read about some research that suggested that it's less stressful to wean through the fence," he said. The experiment has yielded some positive results.

"It seemed like if the calves can go up and make sure their mother is still there, they'll just go right back to eating. There's not as much bawling."

When the calves were locked up, he said, "we totally changed their diet from grass and milk to hay and grain."

When the calves are out on the field they are still on grass, yet can be intro-

duced to grain at that time. Livingston places creep feeders near the fenceline, and "they find that grain pretty quickly," he said.

This year he weaned the fall heifers with this method and followed that by weaning the spring calves this fall through the fence.

When he put groups of calves together that had been weaned the different ways, "it was obvious how much better filled and conditioned the calves on pasture were. They were just looking a lot more satisfied than the calves that came out of the barn," he

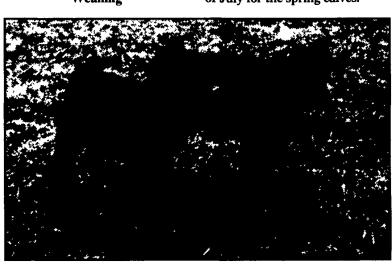
Another benefit to weaning on pasture is that the calves are not weaned in barns located near neighbors' homes. "Neighbors have to be understanding, but we have to be courteous. If we work hard to accommodate neighbors, it will be a little easier (for the nonfarm neighbors) to overlook

the things we can't control," Livingston said.

The farm sends the calves to a custom feeder in Lancaster County, "which allows us to get data back," he said. "We wanted to keep the cattle close to home."

Factoring in trucking costs and lower fed cattle prices out West also convinced Livingston to keep the calves close to home. Also, "this is our main marketing area for breeding stock, so we felt that we should finish here, too."

Growing up on a dairy farm gave him experience in working with cattle, which Livingston augmented by graduating with a degree in animal production from Penn State. He is joined by his wife, Darlene, an at-home mother who helps out with data entry and takes care of their daughter



Two-thirds of the cows calve in the spring, with the remaining one-third calving in the fall, providing different marketing opportunities for the calves.

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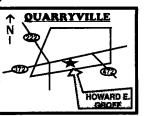
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