

Weaning: A Few More Days May Bring More Dollars for Your Calves

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Goals of Weaning Programs

prepare calves to perform as stockers, feeders, and replacement heifers

- reduce health problems
- increase performance

increase calf value



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Goals During Weaning Period

keep calves growing at a moderate rate

- 0.75 – 1.5 lbs per day

keep costs down

keep rumen healthy

optimize immune function



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Factors That Affect Weaning Age

body condition of cow

- less than a BCS 4



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Factors That Affect Weaning Age

allow time for mammary gland to recover

- colostrum production
- wean at least 60 d before calving



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Factors That Affect Weaning Age

• marketing plan

• calf age

- 6 to 8 months

• calendar date



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Factors That Affect Weaning Age

early weaning: first calf cows
 - calves weaned by about 60 days of age



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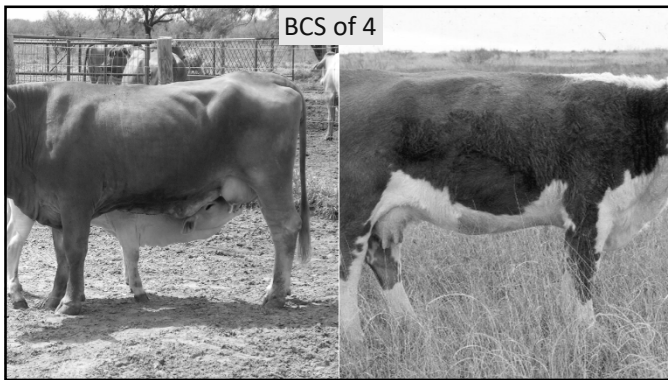
Factors That Affect Weaning Time

drought rebreeding thin cows
 - calves weaned by about 60 days of age

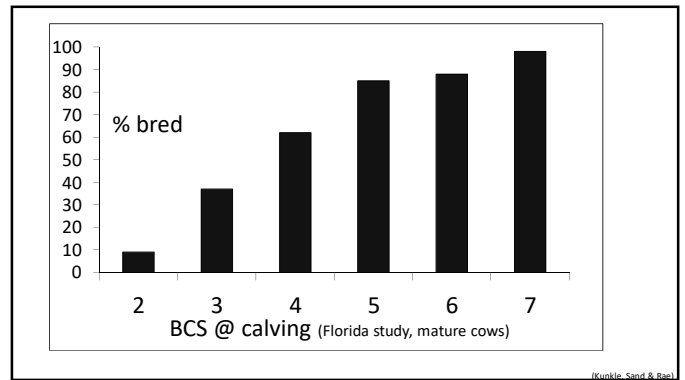
drought save forage or cow condition
 - wean calves at 3 - 6 months of age



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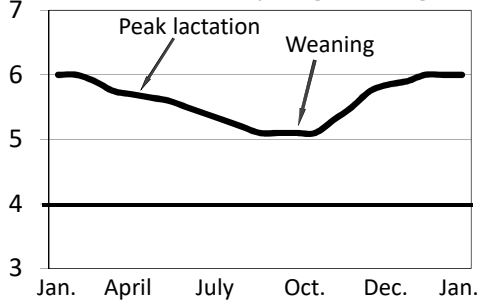


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BCS Pattern: Spring Calving



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Benefits of Weaning

reduced health problems
 improved performance
 improved market timing
 reduced shrink
 increased value



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Reduce Shrink

8-12% shrink is common in calves sold at local auctions

ways to reduce shrink

- wean for at least 45 days
- reduce stress of gathering and handling as much as possible
- minimize amount of time between gathering and weighing
- allow cattle time on feed to fill back up before weighing

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Methods of Weaning

- trailer
- corral
 - calf in the corral
 - cow in the corral
- pasture
- mechanical weaning devices
- fence line is the best



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Fence Line Weaning

- pipe
- net wire
- good barbwire
- electric fence



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Tips for Success

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pay attention to the environment

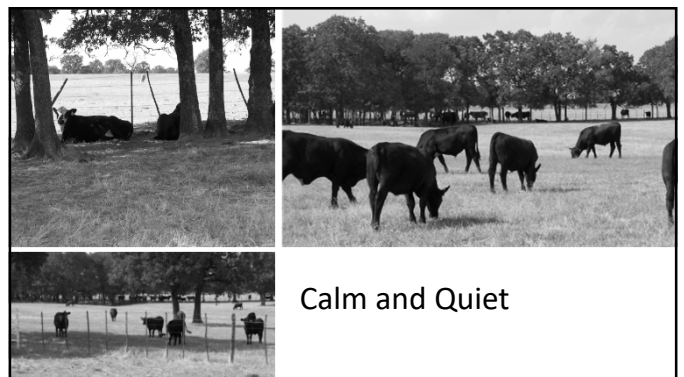
- dust
- shade
- mud
- animal crowding

perform health management practices prior to weaning

- castration, vaccination, dehorning, etc.

wean for at least 45 – 60 days

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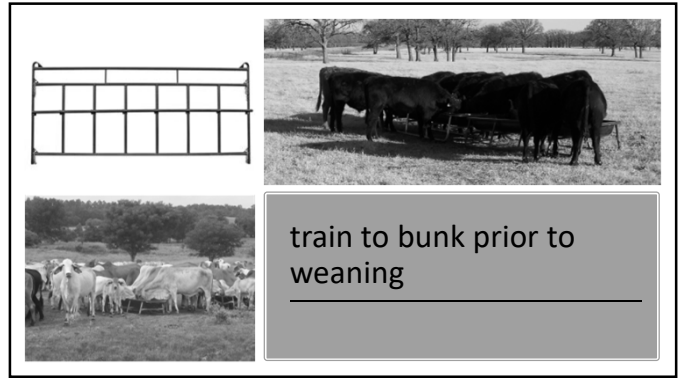


Calm and Quiet

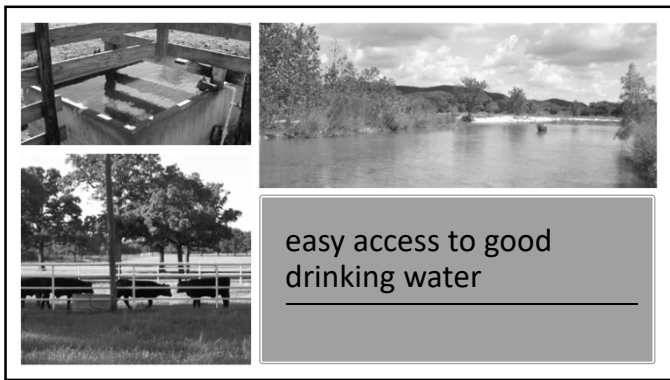
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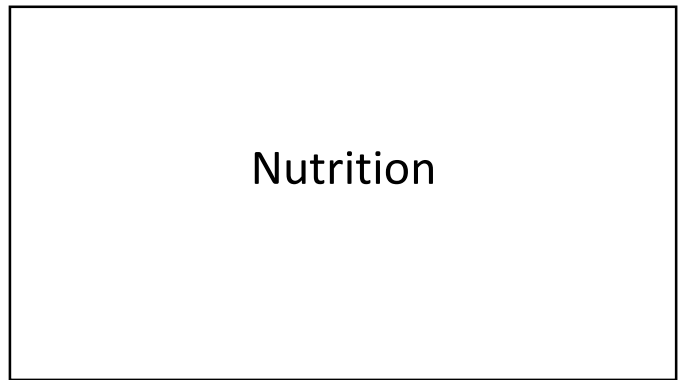
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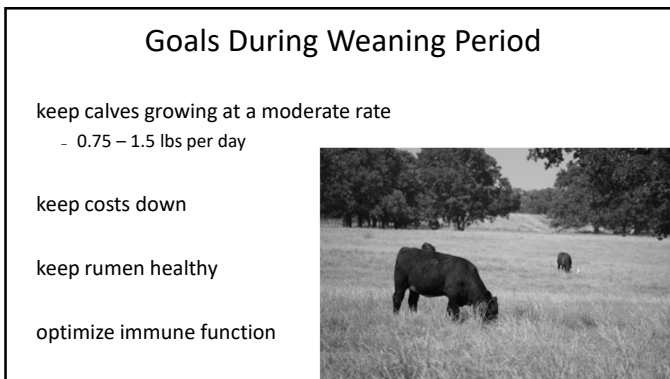
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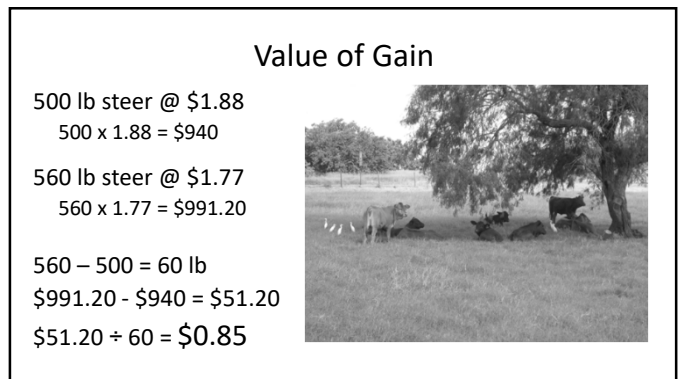
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- plan the grazing program so that high quality pasture is available at the weaning location/facility
- make sure the pasture is not too large
- good stockpiled forage is fine

Date	Coastal bermudagrass	Common bermudagrass	Pensacola bahiagrass
4-23	70	65	60
5-21	65	60	55
6-16	60	55	50
7-16	55	50	45
8-13	50	45	40
9-10	60	55	50
10-8	65	60	55
11-15	60	55	50

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high quality pasture

- only feed to improve gains or teach cattle to eat
- feed 1 to 2 lbs of an energy supplement

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medium or low quality pasture

- feed to increase intake and digestibility of forage
- feed 1 to 1.5 lbs of a high protein supplement

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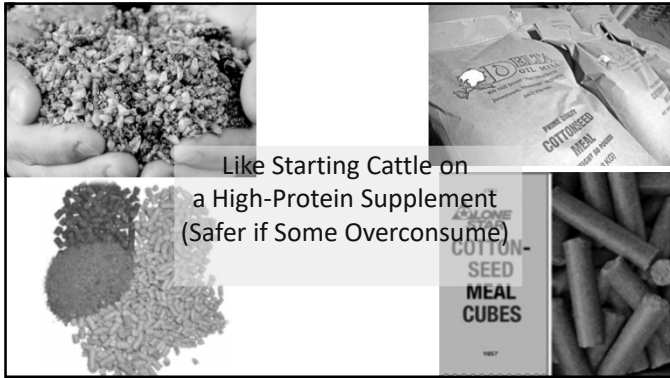
high quality hay

- only supplement grain to improve gains or teach cattle to eat
- feed 1 to 3 lbs of an energy supplement

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Prefer Hand Feeding

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