



Preparing For Weaning Season

For many cattle producers, August marks the beginning of preparations for one of the most important management practices of the year—weaning calves. A well-planned weaning program helps reduce stress on both cows and calves while setting young cattle up for healthy growth and long-term performance.

Start Preparing Before Weaning Day

Successful weaning begins well before calves are separated from their dams. Introduce calves to feed bunks and water troughs ahead of time, and consider offering a quality calf starter or grower ration several weeks before weaning.

Calves that are already familiar with eating from bunks and locating water sources typically adjust more quickly and experience less stress after separation.

Reduce Stress with Low-Stress Weaning Methods

The way calves are weaned can significantly impact their health and performance. One proven approach is fence-line weaning, where cows and calves can still see and hear one another but are unable to nurse.

This method has been shown to reduce stress, excessive bawling, and post-weaning weight loss compared to abrupt separation, helping calves make a smoother transition.

Review Your Herd Health Program

Weaning is also an ideal time to evaluate your herd health program. Work with your veterinarian to develop a vaccination and deworming schedule that fits your operation and management goals.

Healthy calves are better equipped to handle the challenges of weaning and are more likely to maintain steady weight gains throughout the transition.

Support Growth After Weaning

Nutrition and close observation are essential during the weeks following weaning. Provide:

- Plenty of clean, fresh water
- High-quality hay
- A balanced ration designed to support growth

Monitor calves closely for signs of illness, particularly respiratory disease, during the first few weeks after weaning. Early detection and treatment can help minimize setbacks.

The Bottom Line

A little preparation before weaning season can go a long way. By reducing stress, supporting calves with proper nutrition, and maintaining a strong herd health program, you'll help your calves transition successfully and build the foundation for future performance.