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The Calf Bawl

Jones Feed Mills Calf Update – Published by Lisa Zieleman, JFM Calf Specialist – Mobile/ Text: 519-807-3870

Do your Calves go Backwards after Weaning?

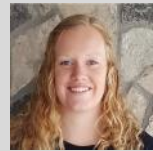
Weaning calves is a common struggle for many dairy operators. “Do I wean early or do I keep them on milk a little bit longer?” This is a common area many people struggle with, as they don’t want to keep the calf on milk too long but they also don’t want their calves to lose the weight they worked so hard to put on. During weaning, a calf undergoes a lot of changes and if they aren’t managed properly, a calf will typically go backwards. This situation is called “post-weaning slump”. When post-weaning slump occurs, a young calf is more susceptible to infections and health issues because the calf is not ready to move on to the next stage. The goal of this article is to help you, as a Producer, to be able to best manage this transition period, reduce stress, and decrease the chance of health issues that can occur with weaning.



The key management strategy to remember during weaning is to minimize stress on the calf. In many situations, calves are weaned individually, put into a group pen the same or following day, have a feed change and some may even be vaccinated at weaning. All of these changes can set a calf back, weaken the immune system and increase the risk of disease. These are all stressors and things we need to manage. Something that often helps is to introduce only one change (stress) per week. On page two (see reverse side) are other helpful ideas that you may find useful during weaning.

Got Calf Questions?

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New! Perfect Udder Colostrum Storage Bags

Pop bottles, zip lock bags, ice-cream containers etc. have all been used to store frozen colostrum. All of these devices either take a long time to thaw colostrum, break in the freezer or as they sit in hot water thawing, or are difficult to easily store or stack frozen colostrum. Jones Feed Mills is excited to announce that we are now working with **DairyTech** and are introducing “**Perfect Udder**” a new, easily managed colostrum bag! These bags are a great way to freeze colostrum, are very sanitary, easy to store, and thaw through in just an hour. Perfect Udder bags come in 2L, 3L, and 4L sizes. If you are interested trying a sample of Perfect Udder bags, contact **Lisa Zieleman at 519-807-3870** and give one a try! (limited availability)



Post-Weaning Slump — Cont'd

1. Make sure your calves are eating approximately 1,000g (1 kg) of calf starter a day for two consecutive days prior to weaning them off milk. This is one of the key ingredients to help your calf transition without issues. *Milk* goes into the abomasum where it curds, and the calf uses it for energy, nutrients, and growth. *Calf starter* goes into the rumen, where it will be fermented to initiate growth of the microbial population and aid in rumen development. As the rumen develops, the calf will begin to utilize more nutrients from calf starter, aiding in growth and development. Once the calf is weaned, and no longer consuming nutrients from milk, it must utilize nutrients from calf starter. However, if the calf is not consuming enough calf starter, the rumen will not be properly developed. If the rumen is under-developed the calf will utilize fat stores to meet energy requirements, causing it to lose weight. Therefore, consumption of calf starter is key before weaning a calf!
2. If you are weaning based on age (typically between 6 and 8 weeks of age), try to focus on how much the calf is eating. Remember, rumen development and a calf's ability to digest dry feed is not solely a function of age. The rumen will develop when the calf starts eating dry feed (mainly calf starter). If a calf has experienced a sickness (e.g. scours), that calf may not consume a lot of starter until it is older.
3. Water, water, and more water! Water should always be available to a calf after 24 hours of age. Calf starter consumption drives water intake. The presence of both starter and water in the rumen aids in proper fermentation, that will enhance growth and development of the microbial population and rumen. Remember to always have fresh water available.
4. When weaning a calf *from large amounts of milk*, a step down method can be effective to push the calf to consume more calf starter. After this stage, keep the calf on the same amount of milk for at least a week to make sure the calf is consuming enough dry feed. When the calf is eating approximately 1,000g a day of starter, you can take the calf off milk completely (see table).

There are many factors that can help contribute to a smooth and successful weaning transition. Being aware of the factors that improve weaning and avoiding too many stressors at one time is best for a calf.

Weaning does not have to be complicated. The key is to ensure calves are consuming ample amounts of starter and to remember not to make changes in feed, housing, and management at the same time as weaning! To review your calf weaning procedures, talk to your JFM Dairy Sales Consultant or book a calf barn and procedure audit with Lisa.

Written by Lisa Zieleman/ Information Source: www.calfnotes.com - Dr. Jim Quigley

Age	0 – 6 weeks	6 -7 weeks	8 weeks
Amount of Milk	3 Liters <u>twice</u> a day	3 Liters <u>once</u> a day	Weaned

Udderly Hilarious Jokes

Q: What do you call a chicken crossing the road?

A: Poultry in motion!

Q: What do you call a group of cattle with a sense of humor?

A: Laughing Stock!



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