

Early Weaning of Beef Calves

Clyde Lane, Jr.
Professor - Animal Science
University of Tennessee

Is the amount of forage available from your pastures getting low due to dry weather conditions? Are you afraid that calves will have a reduced rate of gain or calves will loose condition? This may be the time to consider early weaning of calves.

Early weaned calves can be marketed or can be pulled in to a small pasture or lot and fed a high quality feed that will keep them gaining. Early weaned calves will have a good feed conversion and excellent gains.

Early weaning of calves will reduce the amount and the quality of forage needed by the cow. It will also result in more forage being available to the cows. Without the additional forage the cow may not have adequate energy to properly grow the calf she is carrying, produce a strong healthy calf at birth and to get re-bred with an acceptable time.

Early weaning also presents an opportunity for producers to market preconditioned calves that have been weaned, bunk broke, vaccinated and past any health problems that may have occurred during weaning.

In summary, early weaning is an option for beef producers when the available forage is limited. Producers must take into consideration the available facilities, feed and labor to make sure this practice is feasible on their farm. For additional information on early weaning, contact the local Extension office.