



NEAR MOMMA: These calves are put on one side of a fence with their mothers on the other for weaning. It still allows interaction but prevents nursing.

released when animals are stressed.

They draw five samples of blood from each calf, starting with Day Zero, which is the first day the calves are weaned. They also draw blood on days 5, 14, 28 and 42.

The cortisol samples have been frozen. Buskirk says MSU is in the process of analyzing those samples. However, the haptoglobin samples turned up some interesting results.

As expected, haptoglobin levels jumped on Day 5 for all calves, but fence-line calves had the lowest levels, followed by the abrupt and then the two-stage. "The two-stage method had the highest [haptoglobin]," Buskirk says. "By Day 14, all groups were back to baseline levels of haptoglobin."

To throw in a little twist, and while the research is not complete, high levels of cortisol for a short time may not be a bad thing. "In the lab, we know that cortisol has an effect on meat quality. An increase in cortisol turns on fat cells and stimulates marbling or intramuscular fat," Buskirk says.

In the first year of the study, none of the carcass traits measured were significantly different among treatments. "However, it is interesting to note that abrupt-weaned cattle had numerically higher marbling scores. We want to continue this research to get a better understanding of how stress really impacts calves and beef production," Buskirk says.



BEHAVIOR MONITORING: Janice Siegford is watching weaned calves at the Lake City Research Station for calling, eating, pacing and other behavior.

Canadian research on weaning

ACCORDING to a Canadian study by Derek Haley and Joseph Stookey from the University of Saskatchewan's Western College of Veterinary Medicine and Derek Bailey, a Montana State University associate professor, calves pastured with their mothers walked about three miles per day whether they were wearing the anti-sucking device or not. After pairs were separated, calves were moved into a feedlot pen. Calves weaned in two stages increased their mileage and walked 4.9 miles per day. However, the control calves (weaned abruptly), and housed in the very same pen as the two-stage calves, walked 12.6 miles per day during the same period.

The study also showed that compared to traditional methods, two-stage weaning reduced calves' bawling by roughly 80%.



NOSE CONTRAPTIONS: These plastic nose flaps for calves that prevent suckling are less than \$2 each and are reusable.

More on the nose flap

THE nose flaps, which are lightweight plastic anti-sucking devices, retail between \$1.50 and \$2 depending on the quantity ordered. The devices come in a variety of configurations. Michigan State University research is using two different nose flaps. The orange plastic device is made in South America and is manufactured by Syrvet (www.syrvet.com/ehibition/ehibition_default.asp?pro_id=336) and distributed by Valley Vet at www.valleyvet.com (enter "calf weaner" in the search field).

The yellow plastic nose flap is made in Canada and sold by JDA Livestock Innovations (www.quietwean.com).

"The orange ones have small barbs on them, which I don't think do much but irritate the person applying the flaps," Dan Buskirk says.

Because all the nose flaps are plastic and are only on the calf for five days, they can be washed, disinfected and reused.

"It takes a little practice at first to get them on, but it's not a big deal," Buskirk says.

The procedure can often be done when cattle are in head chutes for other reasons such as vaccinations, tagging or weighing.

News Briefs

Golden Harvest honors adviser from Michigan

Golden Harvest Seeds honored Marv Heasley of Heasley Feed and Seed as a Regional Seed Adviser of the Year for his work in the Byron Center area. Heasley has often been described as popular and well-received among his customers, and has vast product knowledge. Heasley has built strong relationships with his customers and prides himself on the high-quality service he provides for his growers. "I'm thrilled to receive this honor," says Heasley. "We work hard to build our business and provide superior service to our growers, and we're pleased to be recognized for our efforts."

Joining MCGA could lead to free vehicle lease

One lucky Michigan corn grower could drive away with a free lease of a flex-fuel vehicle. As an incentive of the 2007 Michigan Corn Growers Association membership campaign, corn growers have the opportunity to win a free one-year lease on a flexible-fuel vehicle. The drawings will be held at the 2008 Commodity Classic in Nashville, Tenn. Membership in the MCGA is \$60 for one year, \$155 for three years or \$500 for a lifetime. Students in an accredited agricultural program are eligible for a one-year membership in the MCGA for \$20. Membership in the MCGA automatically makes you a member of the NCGA. For more information on becoming a member of the MCGA or on the membership benefits being offered, contact the MCGA at 888-323-6601 or visit www.micorn.org.

Latest field crop research available from MSU

Michigan crop producers can find the latest research-based field crop information in a publication recently made available through Michigan State University Extension. "On-Farm Research and Demonstration" summarizes on-farm field trial results conducted across Michigan during the 2006 growing season. Topics include a research report summary of corn and soybean cropping systems, corn hybrid trials, soybean cyst nematode variety comparison demonstrations, soybean variety trials, and other crop variety trials, such as spring barley, oats, dry field peas, mustard and malting barley. Material in the publication represents projects conducted by 13 MSU Extension educators in 16 Michigan counties. There is no charge for the 44-page book, which is available from county MSU Extension offices and at pest management meetings held across the state. To learn more about Michigan's plant agriculture initiative at MSU, visit www.green.msu.edu.

International Alpaca Fest to be held at Birch Run Expo

The Michigan International Alpaca Fest is set for Sept. 22-23 at the Birch Run Expo Center in Birch Run. There is no admission fee. The hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sept. 22 and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sept. 23.