

Best weaning practices



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A successful weaning...

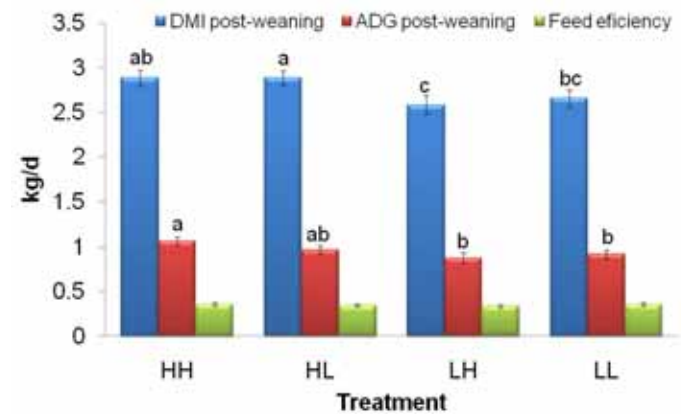
- The calf has a consistent intake of dry feeds
- The calf is capable of fermenting and utilizing the nutrients from dry feed
- The calf is capable of maintaining growth rate without milk or milk replacer intake
- The calf's immune system is developed enough to successfully manage the stresses of this transition



Misconceptions of weaning

- If milk intake is restricted, calves will increase dry grain consumption and this will be a cheaper way to raise them
 - When calves are restricted from milk/milk replacer, their growth is restricted and DMI is correlated to size
 - Limiting growth during the pre-weaning period increases mortality, morbidity, feed efficiency and milk production. This alternative ends up being a lot more costly.
- Calves fed high amounts of milk/milk replacer don't develop their rumen
 - Rumen development is conditional of VFA production; the timing of rumen development is not as critical as early life growth

Post-weaning DMI



Soberon and Van Amburgh, 2011

Traditional weaning protocols



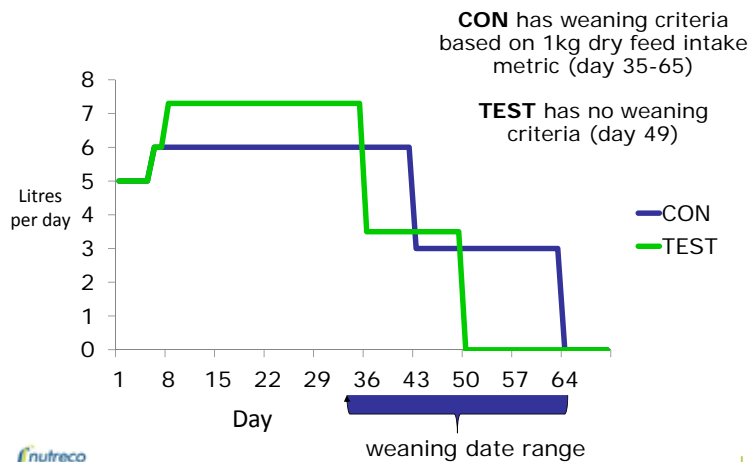
- Weaning according to calf intake
 - Weaned when calves consume 2 lb of starter for 3 consecutive days
 - Hard to implement on large number of calves
 - It hasn't been proven that 2 lb or 3 days are the right numbers
 - Weaned when calves consume 1 lb of starter for 5 consecutive days
- Weaning by age
 - One step down period of 1 week at half the feeding rate
 - Simple, straight forward, easy to implement
 - No data suggesting this a better system
 - Two step down periods of 1 week each
 - Not so simple or straightforward
 - Few data supporting its efficacy

Shur-Gain research

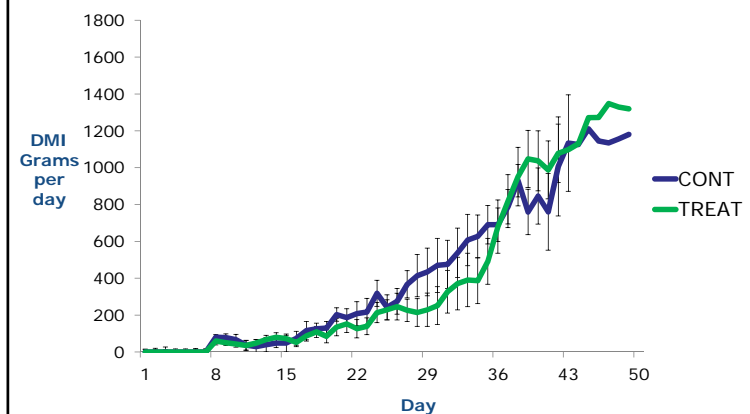


- Determine differences in calf performance as well as rumen development for calves under two different weaning strategies
 - An important question to answer is if calves consuming large amounts of milk replacer can be successfully weaned by age
 - Another objective is to develop a consistent method to measure rumen development

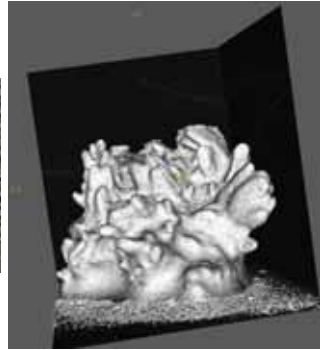
The treatments



Preliminary results



Rumen development



Weaning best practices



- Promote dry feed intake by:
 - Providing free access to fresh water at all times
 - Offer small amounts of a fresh, high quality, and palatable calf starter
 - After 35 days of age, reduce milk/milk replacer intake to half its regular allowance to stimulate dry feed intake
 - Provide sufficient milk/milk replacer to cover maintenance during the step down period
 - Calves consume more dry feed when in groups
- Reduce other stressors during this time:
 - Don't dehorn, vaccinate or move at the same time they are being weaned

Questions

