

BEEF RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS 2009



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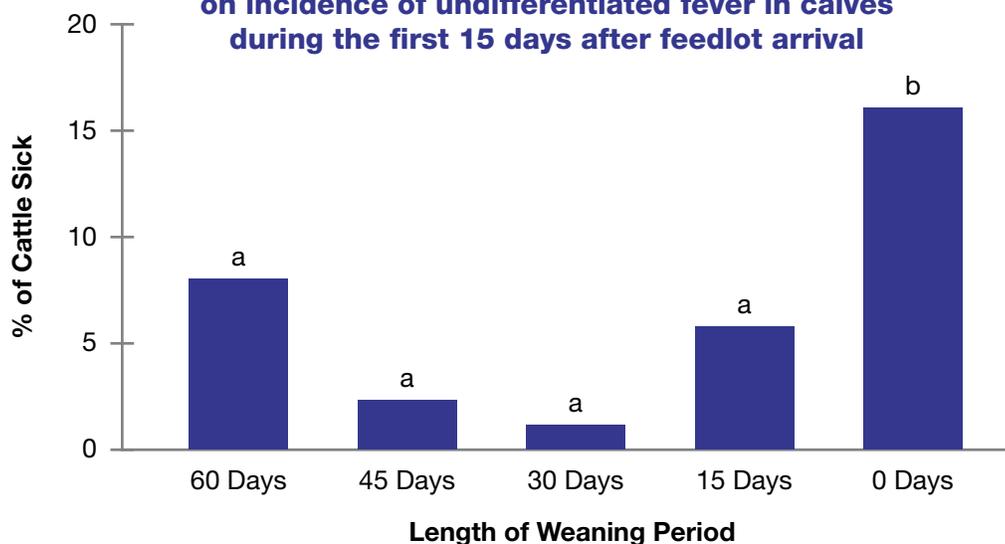
Length of the Weaning Period Affects Postweaning Growth, Health, and Carcass Merit of Ranch-Direct Beef Calves Weaned During the Fall

Justin Bolte

Objective: Test validity of beef industry assumptions about the appropriate length of ranch-of-origin weaning periods for fall-weaned calves aged 160 to 220 days.

Study Description: Angus crossbred calves ($n = 433$) were stratified by age and assigned randomly to one of five weaning periods that corresponded to the length of time between separation from dam and shipping to market: 60, 45, 30, 15, or 0 days. Calves were vaccinated against common diseases 14 days before and again on the day of maternal separation. On a common shipping date (day 0; November 7), calves were transported 3 hours to a commercial auction market and held for 14 hours. Calves were then transported for less than 1 hour directly to a feedlot. All calves were fed the same diet ad libitum; they were also monitored 2 times daily for symptoms of respiratory disease. Carcass data, liver scores, and lung scores were collected.

Effect of length of the ranch-of-origin weaning period on incidence of undifferentiated fever in calves during the first 15 days after feedlot arrival



^{ab} Means with unlike letters differ ($P < 0.01$).

The Bottom Line: Under the conditions of our study, ranch-of-origin weaning periods between 15 and 60 days improved calf health during the receiving period compared with shipping calves immediately after maternal separation. Ranch-fresh calves that are properly vaccinated before maternal separation and exposure to market conditions may not require ranch-of-origin weaning periods longer than 2 weeks to achieve optimal health during the receiving period.



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