Objective: Test validity of beef industry assumptions about the appropriate length of ranch-of-origin weaning periods for summer-weaned calves aged 100 to 160 days.

Study Description: Angus crossbred calves (n = 400) 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; August 24), calves were transported 3 hours to a commercial auction market and held for 14 hours. Calves were then transported for less than 1 hour to a feedlot. All calves were fed the same diet ad libitum throughout the trial. Upon slaughter, livers and lungs were evaluated and carcass measurements were collected.

The Bottom Line: Under the conditions of our study, ranch-of-origin weaning periods between 15 and 60 days did not improve growth performance or carcass merit relative to shipping calves immediately after maternal separation.