

Cattle Weaning

ABRUPT SEPERATION

VS

TWO STAGES: NOSE CLIPS

Natural weaning occurs gradually as a cow decreases the milk yield and nursing frequency for her calf (1). Traditionally, in the beef industry calves are abruptly separated from their mothers to allow cows to get pregnant sooner (1). Abrupt separation cuts off social and nutritional connections, which causes stress (1). Weaning stress increases the time spent walking and vocalizing, which decreases eating and resting (1). A new weaning strategy occurs in two stages, using nose clips to try and reduce weaning stress (2).

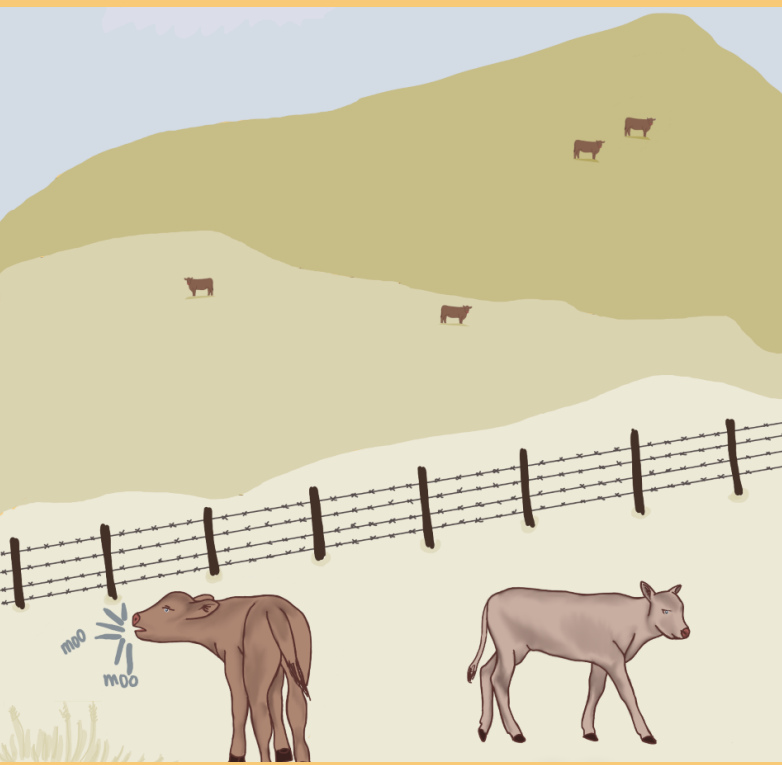
Calves are nursing frequently (1).



< 6 months



Calves are abruptly separated from their mothers. They suddenly stop nursing and all contact with their mothers (1).



Decrease

(2)



Increase

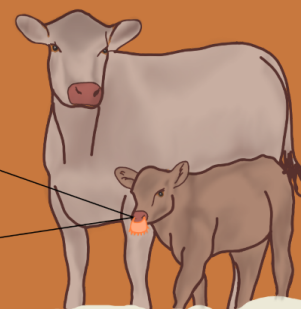


Calves are nursing frequently (2).

< 6 months



Calves are fitted with nose clips to prevent nursing but allow contact with their mother (2).



6 months



Nose clips are removed. Calves are separated from their mothers and no longer have contact (2).



Increase

(2)



Decrease



Two-stage weaning using nose clips can decrease weaning stress when compared to abrupt separation (2). Decreasing stress is critical to increasing cattle welfare in the beef industry.

References:

- 1.von Keyserlingk, M. A. G., & Weary, D. M. (2007). Maternal behavior in cattle. *Hormones and Behavior*, 52(1), 106–113. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.yhbeh.2007.03.015>
- 2.Ungerfeld, R., Quintans, G., & Hötzel, M. J. (2016). Minimizing cows' stress when calves were early weaned using the two-step method with nose flaps. *Animal*, 10(11), 1871–1876. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1751731116000793>

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