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Weaning Age and Management Systems For Fall Born Beef Calves

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Seventeen registered Angus, Hereford and Shorthorn cows calved in September, 1972. The cows calved on pasture and remained on pasture until early November. From November 10 to December 29, the cows were bred for 1973 fall calves. On December 29, 1972, one-half of the calves were weaned and started on a self-fed ration. The remaining one-half of the calves were allowed to continue nursing the cows, but the calves also had access to a creep feeder containing the same ration used for the weaned calves. At the start of the experiment the calves were randomly divided by sex, breed and age. At this time, December 29, 1972, the average age of all calves was 115 days and they averaged 250 lb. in weight.

The experiment was conducted over a 90-day winter feeding period which was initiated on December 29, 1972, and was completed on March 29, 1973. The early weaned calves made an average per head daily gain of 2.49 lb. over the 90-day period and the nursing calves gained 2.35 lb. daily. The early weaned calves averaged 470 lb. per head at 205 days of age and the nursing calves averaged 465 lb.

The cows were fed according to the recommended amounts required for lactating or dry cows. One of the objectives of this trial was to obtain data which may indicate the more desirable management practice for fall born beef calves. That is, should the added required feed be furnished a lactating beef cow or should the calf be weaned early and the added required feed given the weaned calf. Using typical feed costs for the year's work reported, the feed cost differences for calf gains on the two management systems were small. The early weaned group of calves produced gains at the rate of 20 cents feed cost per pound of gain. The calves nursing cows made gains at a cost of 19 cents per pound.

The diet used and self-fed to all calves of both groups was as follows:

	<u>Pounds</u>
Cracked shelled corn	700
Rolled oats	450
Wheat bran	200
32% protein pellets	250
Chopped brome-alfalfa hay	400
	<hr/>
Total mixture	2,000

Prepared for the Seventeenth Annual Cattle Feeders Day, November 2, 1973.

Table 1. Weaning Age and Management Systems for Fall Born Beef Calves (1972-73)

	Calves nursing cows	Calves weaned
<u>Calf data</u>		
Lot number	1	2
No. calves (3 bulls + 6 heifers in lot 1) (3 bulls + 5 heifers in lot 2)	9	8
Age in days at start	114	116
Days on trial (Dec. 29 to March 29)	90	90
Age in days at finish	204	206
Avg. initial weight, lb.	252	248
Avg. final weight, lb.	463	472
Avg. total gain, lb.	211	224
Avg. daily gain, lb.	2.35	2.49
Avg. daily feed, lb.	7.31	13.19
Creep feed per cwt. gain, lb.	311.58	529.25
Creep feed cost per cwt. calf gain, \$	7.48	12.70
Creep feed cost per calf, \$	15.78	28.45
	<u>Cows nursing calves</u>	<u>Dry cows</u>
<u>Cow data</u>		
Number of cows	9	8
Avg. age of cows (years)	6.9	7.5
Avg. initial weight, lb.	1081	1111
Avg. final weight, lb.	1111	1065
Weight gain or loss per head, lb.	+30	-46
Avg. daily feed, lb.		
Brome-alfalfa hay	16.7	18.7
Corn silage	25.4	none
Feed cost per cow for 90 days, \$	24.14	16.88

Feed prices: Brome-alfalfa hay, \$20.00 per ton; corn silage, \$8.00 per ton; creep feed, \$2.40 per cwt.