

Grant Dewell, DVM
 Veterinary Diagnostic and Production Animal Medicine,
 Iowa State University

Lower stress this Fall

Fall is officially here, indicating the end of the production year for cow-calf producers and beginning of a new season for feedyard operations. One critical link between these two segments of the beef industry is decreasing stress of calves in the weaning process.

If you plan ahead to decrease the stress for your calves, you'll also make sure that their weaning does not elevate **your** stress levels!

Besides birth, weaning is the biggest stress that a calf endures. Managing stress is important for ensuring the health of the calf both during the weaning process and when transitioning into a feedyard. There are several steps that cattle farmers can employ to decrease stress this fall.

Pre-weaning

If you did not castrate and dehorn calves in the spring, then it would be beneficial for the calf to have these processes done before weaning rather than at weaning.

It will take about 30 days for a calf to fully recover from the castration and dehorning stress before he can appropriately handle weaning. Therefore, plan ahead and schedule any processing (including respiratory vaccinations) at least a month prior to weaning.

Weaning

There are two well-described weaning programs that can decrease weaning stress levels. Fence-line weaning allows the calves to see, hear and smell the cows during the weaning process. Typically, calves will be calmer because they are still near the cows and will maintain or gain weight during the weaning period. Additionally, there are generally fewer calves that get sick after weaning because of reduced stress during the weaning process with fence-line weaning.

Another option to decrease weaning stress is to use anti-suckling devices (nose flaps) to facilitate weaning. The flap prevents the calf from nursing but allows them to graze while staying with the cow.

The flap is removed in one to two weeks

and the calf is physically separated from the cow. These calves will walk and bawl less when they are removed from the cow, and will have less disease problems post weaning.

Post-weaning

Whether you are backgrounding your calves after weaning or you are a feedyard bringing in new calves, acclimating calves into the feedyard can be beneficial. Acclimating cattle into the confined feeding environment can decrease stress because calves adapt to the new environment faster.

Whether the calf is newly weaned, coming off pasture or a group of 'put together' calves, there is an adjustment phase when they arrive at a feedyard.

Newly weaned calves have lost the social structure of the cow herd and put together calves may be in utter chaos. Over time, these calves will develop a pecking order and other social structures but for a social herd animal, the intervening time can be stressful.

Acclimating does two things for these calves. One the calves are introduced to a feedyard environment, they will be walked around the pen systematically so they visit all four corners, the feed bunk and water trough. They will also typically be walked through the processing facility without being restrained and processed, and then returned to the home pen where there is fresh feed for them.

The second benefit of this acclimation process is that the cattle caregiver

takes over the director role in the social hierarchy. Although calves may still need to determine their place in the pecking order, the director role has been established by the caregiver in walking the calves around the pen, to the processing facility and by having them walk slowly single file past the caregiver.

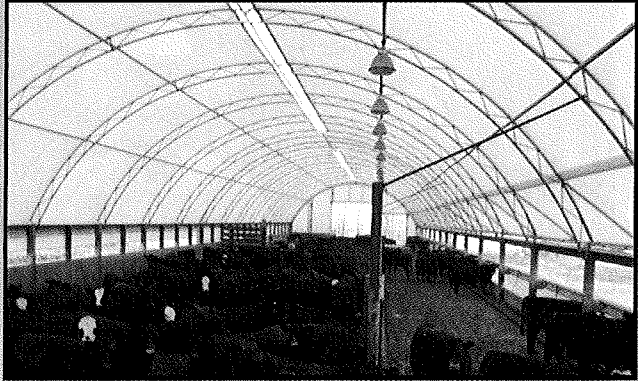
This process will develop trust between the caregiver and calf and will make future handling of calves easier. There is beginning to be evidence that acclimated calves perform better and have less disease than un-acclimated calves.

Resources on decreasing stress are available from the Iowa Beef Industry Council, the Iowa Beef Center or your veterinarian.

Have a low stress fall this year because the winter may not be.

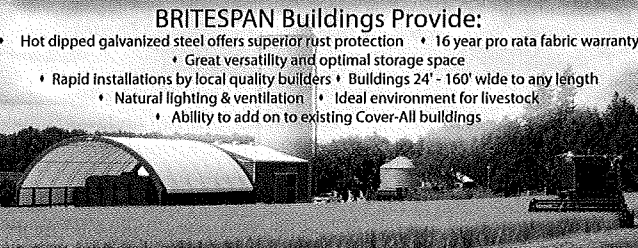
BRITESPAN
BUILDING SYSTEMS INC.

FOR ALL YOUR BUILDING NEEDS



BRITESPAN Buildings Provide:

- Hot dipped galvanized steel offers superior rust protection
- 16 year pro rata fabric warranty
- Great versatility and optimal storage space
- Rapid installations by local quality builders
- Buildings 24' - 160' wide to any length
- Natural lighting & ventilation
- Ideal environment for livestock
- Ability to add on to existing Cover-All buildings



BRITESPAN
BUILDING SYSTEMS INC.
www.britespanbuildings.com

Authorized BRITESPAN Building Systems Dealer
Friedman Distributing, Inc.
1.800.258.3671