

LIMITED PASTURE MAY PROMPT CONSIDERATIONS OF EARLY WEANING

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Dry weather reduces forage availability. Cow-calf producers might want to consider early weaning of their calf crop. Following are some items to evaluate in considering early weaning as a way of reducing pasture requirements:

- Calves born in late winter-early spring months and are 4-6 months of age and can effectively utilize grain and/or concentrate feed in their rations. Conversion will be good and calves can make economical gains.
- Pasture growth during the months of July and August is normally limited in both quantity and quality. With dry conditions, it will be more limited.
- Brood cows' milk production has long been past its peak and provide very little nutrition to their calves for gain.
- Dry cows will require less feed and will probably improve in condition following weaning and subsequent reproduction will also be improved.
- Calves can make efficient conversion of feed to pounds of gain, around 4 to 3 to 1. This is much more efficient than creep feeding.
- Depending on age of calves, improved management may be needed.
- There is some research results that show that the early weaned calves will be comparable or heavier at conventional weaning age than calves left on the cows.

They also perform well in the feedlot and tend to produce carcasses grading low choice or higher compared to conventionally weaned calves.

- Wider availability of special sales for weaned and preconditioned calves makes the choice to wean earlier a more attractive option.