

HEREFORD WORLD

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As an international leader in animal identification (ID) technology, the American Hereford Association (AHA) and Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) LLC have joined forces to bring you the most advanced and reliable ID technology available. As the nation's leading Hereford producer, the AHA has the expertise and resources to lead the way in animal identification technology. CHB, the nation's leading Hereford processor, has the expertise and resources to lead the way in animal identification technology. Together, we can provide you with the most advanced and reliable ID technology available. This is the future of animal identification technology. It's time to get ahead of the curve. Contact us today for more information.

Why the Whiteface?

The American Hereford Association (AHA) and Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) LLC would like to introduce The Whiteface, a publication for commercial cattle producers who value Hereford genetics. We know, as do you, that Hereford cattle are extremely functional and marketable in commercial programs. The Hereford animal provides efficiency, fertility, longevity, an unshakable disposition and a beautiful, sellable cross. Consequently, we've developed a quarterly publication dedicated to the commercial producer who has incorporated the animal into his or her breeding program. You will receive The Whiteface twice a year as an insert in select Hereford World issues and once a direct mail piece. On the pages will be information regarding research, production, management and marketing relevant to commercial programs, and probably to those that are Hereford influenced. You'll be impressed by the marketing opportunities, however, and that that have been made available to participants. For those not familiar with the program, we've provided brief, light-hearted information. For those who are already familiar with or even participating in the program, we hope that you'll find value in the progress updates and industry commentary that follow.

The Hereford breed is important to the commercial industry and you're important to the Hereford breed. Welcome to The Whiteface!

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**Special insert
The Whiteface**



PHOTO BY JUSTIN MOSER

Ready to Wean?

Steps to follow for a stress-free weaning.

by **Troy Smith**

The evolution of agriculture has brought many radical changes to production practices, but one thing that hasn't changed is the seasonality of many events associated with farming and ranching. For folks earning their livings from land and livestock, certain events still mark the changing of the seasons. The seedbed is prepared and crops are planted, tended and harvested. For each practice there is a season.

Cattle producers mark the seasons by certain events too. Most cow-calf operators look forward to calving season and the beginning of a new production cycle. The start of a new growing season for range and pasture often inspires a similar sense of renewal. Cow-calf producers often

anxiously anticipate breeding season and the opportunity to introduce new genetics. They watch the calves grow, looking forward to weaning time.

Well, many producers probably do anxiously await weaning time. For some, however, the anxiety might be better described as a feeling of dread. It's not so much the physical work. The actual gathering of pairs and separation of cows and calves might be the easiest part of weaning. The dreaded part can come several days later and last for weeks. It comes when sickness breaks among those freshly weaned calves and grows with mounting treatment

costs and the need to summon the rendering truck. It culminates with a loss of profit.

Along with separation from their dams and a change of diet, weaning often introduces calves to different physical surroundings. It all adds up to the greatest amount of stress that calves have faced during their lives. All of that stress hampers the young animals' defense against disease. Consequently, managing cattle to minimize stress helps reduce the incidence of sickness in freshly weaned calves. Of course, not all stress can be avoided. That's why veterinarians emphasize the importance of managing herd health and nutrition so calves have the best chance of fighting off disease challenges at weaning time.

A program

An appropriate health program, including vaccination against specific pathogens, should enhance immune response to prepare calves for where they're going after leaving momma's side. But every operation is different with different resources. Producers face different environments and they have different goals. There is no one-size-fits-all program for getting ready to wean.

"Each producer, together with a consulting veterinarian, has to figure out what works best for his or her situation," says Terry Engelken, Mississippi State University Extension veterinarian. "That includes deciding what pathogens to vaccinate against and what kind of product is most appropriate. And deciding when to deliver a vaccination program may require compromises between what is ideal and what is practical."

Jeff Lord admits to struggling through some tough weaning periods in the past. While running some 400 spring-calving Hereford cows near Mayfield, Idaho, Lord and his father (Erin) face challenges familiar to many public lands ranchers. During the summer, pairs graze vast, remote pastures where access is difficult. The terrain, says Lord, tends to be of a vertical nature.

"We've started giving shots for respiratory disease as well as blackleg when we brand calves in the spring," explains Lord. "But after we go to summer pasture, there are no facilities for working cattle. We'd like to give booster vaccinations a few weeks ahead of weaning, but in our situation, it

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PHOTO BY SHELBY ROGERS

Parasite control is important. Dr. Terry Engelken stresses the importance of deworming calves, specifically those in pasture environments where warm and wet conditions favor parasite life cycles.

isn't practical. So the calves aren't vaccinated again until we bring them home and lock them up for weaning. It's not ideal, but it's been working pretty good for us."

Compared to Idaho's high country, Nebraska's climate usually is more forgiving. At Zero Hereford Ranch, near Miller, the Smedra family enjoys the use of easily accessible facilities that were developed through the years. The ranch runs close to 650 spring-calving cows and typically weans in October.

"My mom consults with our veterinarian and tries to keep us up-to-date on animal health," says Brock Smedra, who operates the ranch along with his sister, her husband and their parents. "Since we've gone to a calf preconditioning program, we've definitely had fewer sick ones to treat. We deworm our calves too and we think that has made a difference."

Smedra says when baby calves are worked the first time, at branding, they are vaccinated against blackleg and other clostridial infections. Calves, as well as the cows, are treated for internal and external parasites. Three to four weeks prior to weaning, calves are preconditioned, including vaccination against viral respiratory disease and haemophilus bacterial infection. At weaning time, booster vaccinations are administered and calves are dewormed again.

In the hills of Tennessee, near Pikeville, most of the 400 Hereford cows owned by Burns Farms drop

their calves in the fall. By three months of age the calves have been dehorned, castrated, dewormed and given their first round of vaccinations for clostridial and respiratory disease. At 7-8 months of age, previous vaccinations are boosted and vaccination against pasturella bacteria is added.

"We like to get calves vaccinated twice before we wean, to get their immunity up," explains Joe Burns. "We always provide the cattle with free-choice mineral formulated to make up for what minerals our grass lacks. And we'll introduce the calves to a little bit of grain prior to weaning — just long enough for them to learn what it is. When we do wean, we keep the calves right across the fence from their mothers for a few days. It really holds down the stress."

Start early

Each of the operations described employs different methods to ready their calves for weaning. The common thread is that all have found ways to start the process early. They don't wait until weaning time, when stress factors are greatest, to initiate immunity to the respiratory maladies — infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR), bovine viral diarrhea (BVD), parainfluenza-3 virus (PI₃) and bovine respiratory syncytial virus (BRSV) — that most commonly cause postweaning sickness and open the door to secondary bacterial infections.

Vaccinating suckling calves against blackleg is a no-brainer for many producers, and Engelken says early vaccination for respiratory diseases should also become part of producers' regular routines. However, Engelken says getting ready for weaning really starts before the calf is born.

"It begins with the cow — a healthy mother receiving good nutrition. Then manage the herd to minimize dystocia and provide the cleanest environment possible for calving. And making sure calves receive adequate colostrum during the first 24 hours of life will affect calf health through the suckling phase, to weaning and beyond," emphasizes Engelken.

"When it comes to vaccinations, producers should talk to their veterinarian about what kind of protection is needed in their area and what kind of product is best for them, whether it's a killed virus or a modified-live virus," Engelken adds.

Producers also should control parasites in calves. Engelken says even very young calves can carry significant worm burdens, which steal nutrients (especially protein), impair growth and hinder immune response. Deworming calves can be particularly

important in pasture environments where warm and wet conditions favor parasite life cycles.

"My preference calls for deworming twice and vaccinating twice before weaning time. For example, give the first dose of vaccine and dewormer by the time calves are 3-4 months of age, and repeat them about a month prior to weaning," offers Engelken. "If it's not possible to get both doses of vaccine and dewormer in the calves prior to weaning, the next best thing is to make sure they get at least one dose prior to weaning. This method is not as good but it's better than giving the first dose at weaning, with the booster coming two to three weeks later."

North Dakota State University Extension Veterinarian Charles Stoltenow agrees. He also recommends two vaccinations against viral respiratory diseases, but even one dose administered at least two weeks prior to weaning will help boost immune response and leave calves better prepared for that stressful time.

"Clinical trials show that the best response comes from two doses given three to four weeks apart. But

time and labor constraints, as well as accessibility and availability of facilities, are factors that influence what is most practical," Stoltenow explains. "But you could use as many vaccines as you want and still not build immunity if you have neglected nutrition. Hopefully, range and pasture offer the basic

nutrients during the growing season. If not, such as during severe drought, supplemental feed may be needed. Producers that practice early weaning should always make sure calves are on a good plane of nutrition," he adds.

Stoltenow also stresses the importance of mineral supplementation to address area-specific deficiencies. He warns against overlooking the need for trace minerals as they play roles in the production of digestive enzymes and proper absorption of other nutrients.

"Start early to plan your nutrition and health programs, and try to minimize stress whenever possible," Stoltenow advises. "Long before weaning time arrives, look for ways to help your calves succeed, instead of setting them up to fail." **HW**

"Start early to plan your nutrition and health programs, and try to minimize stress whenever possible. Long before weaning time arrives, look for ways to help your calves succeed, instead of setting them up to fail."

— Dr. Charles Stoltenow



PHOTO BY ANGIE STUMP DENTON

An appropriate health program, including vaccination against pathogens, helps calves thrive after weaning.