

Five step weaning protocol



Successful weaning comes with a plan

- Take your time, ideally the weaning period would last 3-4 weeks
- Feed all other feeds ad libitum → calf starter + roughage + water
- Provide sufficient feeding space
- Monitor calf starter feed intake
- Don't move calves around weaning
- Monitor performance post weaning to check success of weaning protocol

Calf starter

- A suitable concentrate should be offered as soon as possible and fed fresh daily with rejected feed removed.

Roughage

- Good quality straw should be made available at all times.
- Chopped straw has been shown to support intakes.

Water

- Water availability and quality is a critical success factor.
- Clean, fresh water should be available at all times.
- Rule of thumb: calves can drink 4 litres of water for every 1kg starter feed consumed.

Milk

- First step is to reduce milk volume from week 7.
- Reduce by approximately 25% e.g. reduce from 8 litres/day to 6 litres/day.
- Do not change the type of milk or milk replacer being fed.
- Do not change the concentration of milk replacer being fed.
- From week 8, continue to reduce milk further in steps or gradually depending on feeding system.

Monitor starter intake

- Ensure adequate feeding space per calf.
- Monitor feed intake where possible – average intake per head in a group can provide a good indication.
- The calf should be consuming at least 2kg of concentrates per day for three consecutive days before weaning.

Monitor calf

- Check bodyweight around weaning.
- Target a minimum of 2 x birthweight before weaning.
- If target not achieved, extend milk feeding for 1-2 weeks.

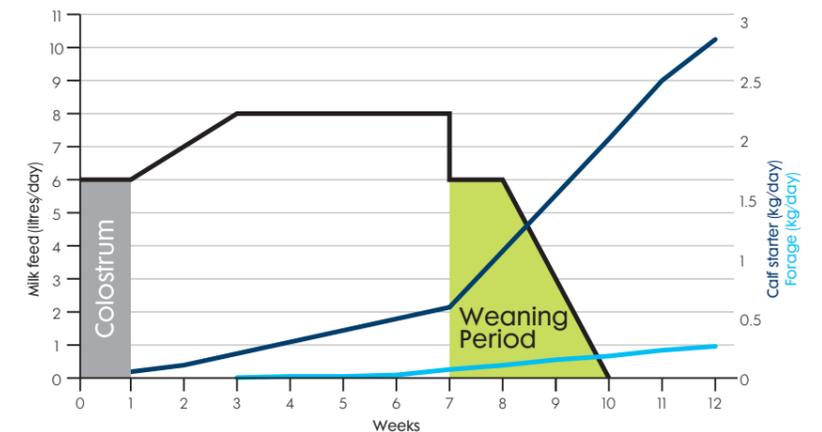
Milk

- Abrupt weaning causes stress and should be avoided where possible.
- Gradual weaning over a 2-3 week period will support the weaning transition.
- Reduce feeding frequency as well as volume during the weaning period.
- Aim to finish milk feeding at a minimum of 8 weeks; 10-12 weeks preferred if system allows.
- Do not move calves immediately after weaning.

Monitor calf

- Monitor effect of weaning protocol by weighing calves at specific time points after weaning e.g. 4 weeks after weaning and/or 6 months of age.
- Growth of calves is still efficient post weaning.
- Investigate reasons for calves not meeting targets.

Feeding and weaning schedule



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