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Clell V. Bagley

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Animal Health
Fact Sheet



SUMMARY OF RATION TRIAL AT WEANING

1994

Clell V. Bagley, DVM, Extension Veterinarian
Utah State University, Logan UT 84322-5600

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AH/Beef/33

OBJECTIVES

To compare health and gain response with three different rations at weaning.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Calves used were those of the USU farm. The calves were brought into the chute by group, each calf was sexed as it entered the chute and then each gender was assigned, alternately to one of three ration groups (to equalize the gender in each group). Gender was steer, heifer and bull and each of those were scattered across the three ration groups. After weighing the calves for each of the three groups were penned together.

They were weaned and worked on September 27 and 28.

RATIONS

All three pens of calves were fed just grass hay for both of those days. On September 29 they were started on their planned rations. These were:

Group 1-	Group 2-	Group 3-
Alfalfa Hay 12#	Alfalfa Hay 10#	Grass Hay ad lib
Barley 4#	Barley 4#	
	Silage 6#	

These rations were calculated for the numbers in each pen and fed so they would clean up almost all by the next day. They had started eating the grass hay well since weaning.

The waterers were locked open so they could learn to use them.

After weighing on October 12, all calves were put onto the ration of Group 2 (with silage) and remained on this ration for the duration of the trial.

WEIGHING/TEMPING

The calves had been weighed at weaning. They were weighed again on October 12 and November 1 (at the conclusion of the trial).

Temperatures were taken on October 4 (put into pen in group and recorded). They were taken again at each of the later weighings.

VACCINATION

All calves were vaccinated in May for IBR, PI3 with intranasal MLV. They were vaccinated at weaning with IM, MLV IBR, PI3, BVD, BRSV. They were revaccinated for BRSV on October 12 at weighing.

RESULTS

Illness

One calf did not adjust to feed and was very gaunt so was isolated, fed and treated but put back in pen in 3 days.

Later 2 calves bloated a little.

Ration

It took a few days for those in groups 1 and 2 to begin eating their rations but they started relatively quickly. We were concerned about bloat, but that was not a problem initially. There was some problem in other calves later, so the hay was decreased slightly and more silage was added. (This ration did include some grass hay as well.)

Weight Gain

Group/Ration	Number of Calves	Gain (lbs)		
		0-2 weeks	2-4 weeks	Total
1) Alfalfa (12#) + Barley (4#)	33	-3.6	46.2	42.5
2) Alfalfa (10#), Barley (4#), Silage (6#)	32	12.8	30.0	42.8
3) Grass hay (ad. lib)	32	6.1	6.4	13.0

Calves fed only grass hay for two weeks gained significantly less than calves on either of the other rations. There was only one ill and one bloated calf, both in group one, and their inclusion/exclusion did not affect the significance of the gain data.

It would appear the best weaning ration for our area may be:

- Feed grass hay for 1-2 days.
- Top dress onto the grass hay a ration of chopped alfalfa, rolled or ground barley, and corn silage.
- Gradually increase the mixed ration and decrease the grass hay.
- For bloat control, include some grass hay in the mixed ration and increase the silage if needed.

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