

WEEKLY NEWS COLUMN  
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## FALL TRANSITIONS FOR BEEF PRODUCERS

Fall is a time of transition. Agriculture producers, whether in crops or livestock must always be thinking and planning ahead. Just as families transition into the new school year, cattle producers use fall as a transition season on their operations. Fall is a time to move spring-born calves off of cows in preparation for winter by weaning. Beef Cattle specialists Dr. Bob Weaber, Dr. Brad White, Dr. Dustin Pendell and Dr. Bob Larson at K-State Research and Extension's Beef Cattle Institute provide tips to producers to help make transitions more efficient, and ultimately more profitable.

Following a few tips from K-State's Beef Cattle Institute (BCI) can help minimize stress on calves during weaning maximize efficiencies.

BCI's top preventative tips for weaning calves include:

6. Kill parasites so cattle are more healthy.
5. Prepare the calves for their new environment by providing water and feed bunks before weaning.
4. Manage the nutritional needs of your calves.
3. Minimize stressors prior to weaning.
2. Stimulate immunity through vaccination to match the disease challenges that calves are going to face.
1. Create a comprehensive plan for understanding your pre-weaning activities to make sure they all fit together.

While considerations and actions are being taken for calves in pre-conditioning for weaning, producers should also make some considerations for cows. Because the herd is gathered for pre-weaning activities in calves, this is a good time to make some assessments of your cows. Going into the fall and winter, it's important to begin assessing the body condition score (BCS) of cows. Optimal BCS for cows at calving is BCS 5-6. In the fall, if cows are thin or forage is limited in early fall, producers may need to consider early weaning to increase BCS prior to calving to decrease nutrient requirements of the cow. Thin cows can be sorted off and supplemented in the fall to increase body condition without supplementing the entire herd. This helps ensure they are ready for lactation, providing good colostrum and milk for the calf. Having an appropriate BCS at calving helps to ensure cows are also at an appropriate BCS going into the breeding season and will likely breed back quicker.

Producers may also consider pregnancy checking cows in the fall prior to weaning. Early pregnancy checking at 110-120 days after the start of the breeding season allows a producer to determine how early in the breeding season a cow/heifer is bred. This allows producers to increase their selection pressure for fertility in cows. Cows that didn't breed early may be culled in the fall, resulting in keeping back cattle that breed quicker and stay in the herd longer.

For more information and tips to improve the efficiencies of your operation, visit the Beef Cattle Institute at [ksubci.org](http://ksubci.org), or check out the Cattle Chat podcast on any major podcast platform. Additional information about local agriculture programs is available from Cowley County Extension, 620-221-5450 or email Kelsey Nordyke ([klndyke@ksu.edu](mailto:klndyke@ksu.edu)).

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