

# Tennessee Beef Cattle Improvement Initiative



## Comparison of Weaning Methods Demonstration

Everyone knows of at least one method for weaning calves. Most often that method involves bawling calves and cows for several days. Along with the bawling comes the weight loss, stress on the calves and cows, possible sickness, and much more. Research from University of California, Davis showed calves weaned by only separating them from the cows by a fence, showed less signs of distress (walking the fence, bawling, less time grazing). The weights of those calves also did not drop in the first few weeks after weaning but rather increased. Another low-stress method of weaning is called the “Two step weaning” method. This method involves placing a plastic weaning device in the calf’s nose for 7 to 10 days prior to being separated from the cow. Research at the University of Saskatchewan has shown that calves weaned with the two-step method while with the cows and with the weaning devices in place, actually behaved the same as those still with the cows. When these calves were separated from the cows they vocalized 85% less, walked 80% less and spent 25% more time eating than calves weaned the traditional method. This on-farm demonstration compares these methods with traditional, total separation weaning.



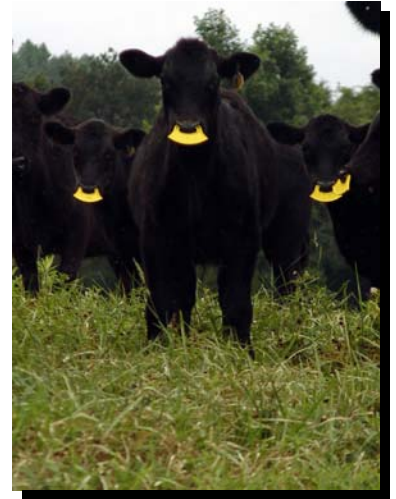
### Weaning Methods Description

### Demonstration Protocol

#### Lawrence County Demonstration

Groups	Initial Weight 10/8/05	Weight at 7 days	Gain	Weight at 58 days	Overall Gain
	----- lbs -----				
Fenceline	581	604	+23	751	170
Fenceline	567	588	+21	750	183
Two-step Weaning	545	570	+25	719	174
Total Separation not dehorned	575	568	-7	718	143
Total Separation & dehorned at weaning	629	613	-16	751	122

led into two or three groups  
methods to be compared and  
g method used by producer  
l soyhulls 2 weeks prior to  
l 10 lbs per head / day  
e evening



### Did It Make Money?

#### Fenceline and Two-Step Weaning

Beginning value	575 lbs @ \$113.56	\$652.97
Ending value	750 lbs @ \$105.20	<u>789.00</u>
Gross Margin		136.03

Less feed and health program 56.40

Net return over feed & health program \$ 79.63

#### Total Separation Weaning

Beginning value	575 lbs @ \$113.56	\$652.97
Ending value	718 lbs @ \$105.20	<u>755.34</u>
Gross margin		102.37

Less feed and health program 56.40

Net return over feed & health program \$ 45.97

Additional Return over Total Separation Weaning \$ 33.66