



- **How do separation and weaning work with little stress?**
- **How can we achieve reliable performance testing of dams that are suckled?**

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Workshop ProYoungStock/GrazyDaisy

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«Late, but early weaning and separation» (Practice Abstract I)

- In CCC-Systems cows and calves can live together for a certain time and this time in most cases seems to be good for both of them. This time lasts from birth to several weeks of age until several months, depending on the decisions of their farmers.
- In terms of conventional systems, we call the time of separation in these systems “late separation”. But from the point of view of the animals, it is an “early separation”, because normally and naturally cows let their calves suckle for at least 9 months and this is never done in those systems.
- Therefore we need good strategies to achieve that “late, but early weaning and separation” are well bearable for the animals.



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Solutions

- Weaning should not be done before the calf is 3 months old
- Weaning and separation should be done gradually and not all of a sudden; so animals can get used to the new situation step by step
- That way we can keep stress for animals and humans low and we can prevent weight losses of calves and milk ejection problems in cows



Step by step

- gradually reducing the amount of milk for the calf,
- gradually reducing the contact time between cow and calf,
- carrying out all upcoming changes step by step (separation, weaning, change of housing and feed).
- allowing 1-2 weeks for all transition periods.
- Separate / weane calves as a group and not individually.
- Every strategy as to be adapted to the individual farm and animals

Strategy I: stepwise reduction of cow-calf contact

- Calves are allowed to be with the cows for shorter and / or less frequent periods.
- In systems with permanent cow-calf-contact, the calves are separated for a few hours at first, then gradually longer.
- In restrictive systems, the weaning calves are allowed to suckle later than the younger ones or only once a day.



Don't change everything at the same time

Strategy 2: first separation, then weaning

- Calves are separated from their mother, but continue to receive milk: by teat buckets or automatic milk feeders or by a foster cow.
- Weaning from the foster cow is possible by adjusting the duration of contact and the number of calves per foster cow.



Strategy 3: first weaning, then separation

- Calves are weaned, but stay with the cows for 1-2 weeks before separation
- Calves can no longer suckle the udder because of nose flaps that reliably stick to their nose. Nose flaps should not be used more than one week in order to avoid injuries.
- Fence-line weaning enables visual and physical contact of calf and cow and can facilitate final separation as an intermediate step.



Reliable performance testing of dams that are suckled (Practice abstract 2?)

Dams that are suckled usually don't give all their produced milk during milking, and fat- and protein contents of this milked milk are often different from normal. That's why it is difficult to carry out reasonable performance testing in these cows.

Therefore we need good strategies and concepts how we can do reasonable testing anyway.

Strategy I: later start of testing

- The **International Committee for Animal Recording (ICAR)** (an International Non-Governmental Organisation with around 130 organisations from around 60 countries) is continuously creating “the global standard for livestock data”. Recently ICAR raised the time for cows allowed to stay without any performance testing during lactation from 80 to **95 days**. When testing is performed regularly after 95 days in milk the cow will still get a calculated standard lactation.
- So cows can suckle their calves until 90 days after birth without any performance testing. Testing has to start 5 days later.
- If until then no testing person is coming, the farmer should do the performance testing himself or herself. But he or she needs an allowance for that from the breeding organization (with AMS it is easier to get that).

Strategy 2: add suckled milk to the record

- Testing all cows in milk on every test day and adding the amount of milk the calf had suckled for each nursing cow.
- In this strategy calves have to be weighed before and after suckling. The difference between after and before suckling is around the amount of milk the calf has got. This has to be shown to the testing person and he or she has to add it to the milked milk of the respective cow.
- But still the fat- and protein contents are not measured separately and can be more or less unrealistic.
- Also for that strategy an allowance from or a contract with the breeding organisation is necessary

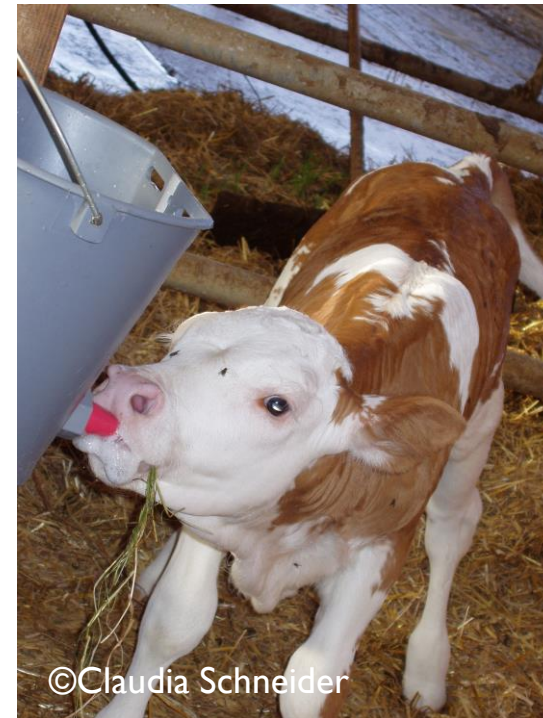
Strategy 3: business as usual with unusual results

- Testing all cows in milk on every test day, also the suckled ones
- Cows and calves have to be separated for that for a short time.
- Often cows won't give all their milk and measured contents will be unrealistic; it is an option to ignore all that.
- This is only possible to a certain extent, because milk sample analysis is usually done with the NIRS-method. The threshold for fat contents is usually set at 1.5%. Below that the NIRS system cannot measure anything in that sample (neither SCC), because it is not calibrated for that.



Strategy 4: get calves and cows used to not being together now and then

- Separate cows and calves about once a week and don't let them suckle for one milking time, but give them some milk in a bucket (often they won't take it and rather starve)
- After several times the animals will learn that this happens now and then and that they will get together again, soon.
- So, for the test day it will not be an exception that they get separated and the cow will give a reasonable amount of milk with acceptable contents.
- **This strategy is a bit complicated and at first animals vocalize**



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Thanks