

# Complying with regulations

**T**his week, we are going to look at the regulations surrounding weaning under the Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme (SCWS).

It is important that you have all your ducks in a line prior to starting the weaning process to ensure that stress levels are minimised, calves remain in a healthy condition and you have complied with the regulations of the SCWS.

Figure 1 gives a quick checklist of what steps you should have carried out in advance of weaning. You should delay weaning until all of these boxes are ticked. Failure to do so could result in you losing out on your €40 per head payment and increase the risk of a pneumonia outbreak.

## WEANING

Under the conditions of the SCWS, farmers with more than 10 cows are not permitted to wean calves abruptly.

Weaning must be carried out on a graduated basis, with cows being removed from the group over a period of time.

On smaller units with less than 10 cows, weaning can be carried out as normal with all the cows removed from the group at once.

The regulations for herds with more than 10 cows that are weaning calves out on grass are as follows:

- Calves cannot be weaned abruptly, e.g. you cannot remove all the cows on the same day.
- Cows must be removed from the calves on at least two separate occasions.
- There must be a five-day interval between each group of



Farmers with more than 10 cows must wean calves on a graduated basis. Cows must be removed from the group of calves on at least two occasions with at least a five day interval in between.

cows being removed.

- Cows should be removed to a separate location on the farm to avoid sight of the calves during the weaning process.

### Alternatively:

- Cows removed from the group can be grazed in an adjacent field provided fencing is adequate to prevent stock remixing.
- Calves must remain on meals for two weeks post weaning.
- Calves cannot be sold for at least two weeks post weaning.

For farmers with late calving herds who wish to delay weaning until after housing, then cows should simply be

removed to an adjacent pen during the weaning process. However, this must be carried out on a gradual basis with cows removed on at least two separate occasions. Although it is not a requirement of the SCWS, it is good practice to delay weaning for at least two weeks after housing. This will ensure calves have adjusted to the stress of being housed.

Giving calves access to a well-bedded and ventilated creep area will also help reduce stress during the weaning process.

A suitable weaning pro-

gramme is outlined in the panel (below) for a farmer weaning cows and calves while out on grass.

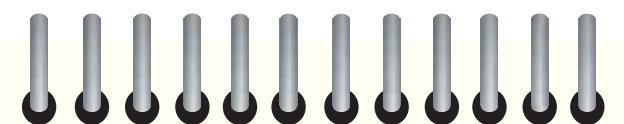
It is important that both the cows and calves are checked regularly during the weaning process — at least twice daily.

The earlier you pick up problems, the easier they are to treat.

Don't forget cows are also under stress at weaning. Therefore, it is essential that they have access to magnesium for five to seven days post weaning.

**Figure 1**  
Checklist of jobs prior to weaning

Calves have been on meals for at least four weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>
The pre-weaning form has been completed and returned	<input type="checkbox"/>
A worm treatment has been administered in the past 14-21 days	<input type="checkbox"/>
Calves have been vaccinated against clostridial diseases (especially blackleg)	<input type="checkbox"/>
If carrying out a vaccination programme, the final booster shot has been administered at least two weeks earlier	<input type="checkbox"/>
An adequate supply of good quality grass has been built up to carry calves over the weaning process	<input type="checkbox"/>



### Homework for Week 3

- Start going through your pre-weaning forms and complete date of castration and dis-budding where necessary.
- Where you are selling calves and are targeting a special sale, make sure meals are introduced in time to allow weaning to take place at least two weeks in advance.
- If you are planning on selling calves at a special sale in mid-late September, meals need to be introduced this week.
- Where weaning is scheduled to take place in mid-late September, the primary vaccination shot should be administered on farms that intend to implement a pneumonia vaccination programme.
- Calves should be vaccinated against clostridial diseases.

## A suitable weaning strategy for a spring calving herd out on grass

### – for herds with more than 10 cows

#### Day 0:

- Move cows and calves into a well sheltered field with good quality grass. Where calves are being fed ad-lib meals using a creep feeder, make sure the feeder is full. Where creep grazing is practised make sure calves have access to good grass. A field of silage after grass is ideal.

#### Day 1:

- Remove the first group of cows from the field. Ideally, these should be the thinner cows in the group, e.g. the first calving heifers or the older cows that are starting to drop

condition. You can either move these cows to an adjacent paddock or out of sight of the calves. If moving them to an adjacent paddock, you will require at least three strands of electric fencing wire with a good current. It is my view that calves settle quicker where the cows are removed out of sight. You also have less poaching. Irrespective of where you move the cows, make sure they have access to magnesium for at least three to four days after weaning. Twenty-four hours after weaning, you can start to cut back the feed on cows for a few days to get them dried off quickly.

#### Day 6:

- Under the conditions of the SCWS, you must delay removing any further cows

from the group for five days. This is to allow the calves that were weaned in the first round time to settle. At this stage, you can remove the rest of the cows from the group. It is essential that you take all the necessary steps to ensure you do not put calves under further stress post weaning. Therefore, make sure they continue to have access to good quality grass and continue to be fed meals. If using a creep feeder, keep the hopper filled at all times. Handling should only be carried out where necessary e.g. where a calf is sick.

#### Days 14 to 20:

- Meal feeding must continue for a period of 14 days after weaning during which period calves cannot be sold nor castrated.

Livestock editor Justin McCarthy looks at complying with weaning regulations

### THIS WEEK

Various methods of weaning including weaning regulations under the Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme.

### Week 4

Completing the pre and post weaning forms including the Irish Farmers Journal special weaning calculator.

### Week 5

Managing the calf post weaning and ensuring the calf remains healthy up until selling.

### Week 6

Managing the cow post weaning including reducing feed costs, body condition scoring and cow health.

Don't miss your free IFJ weaning calculator next week.

