Impact of age and duration of maternal separation on the welfare of beef bull calves during spring processing

WHAT HAPPENS AT SPRING PROCESSING?
Calf separated from their dam
- Tagging
- Vaccination
- Castrating
- Branding
- Handling and Restraint

Does calf age and length of separation from its dam at weaning impact its welfare?

What we did

4 weeks
- 1 hr
- 5 hr

8 weeks
- 1 hr
- 5 hr

Roped, restrained, processed

Compared to calves separated for 5 hr from their dams, calves separated for 1 hr spent:
- Standing
- Tail flicking
- Foot stomped
- Explored

Compared to 4 week old calves 8 week old calves had:
- Stress Score

What we found

Compared to calves separated for 5 hr from their dams, calves separated for 1 hr spent:
- Standing
- Tail flicking
- Foot stomped
- Explored

Compared to 4 week old calves 8 week old calves had:
- Stress Score

1 hr

5 hr

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Longer maternal separation before processing improves calf welfare

Calf age at processing does not appear to impact calf welfare after processing

Sponsored by the Anderson-Chisholm Chair in Animal Care & Welfare