

November 2, 2000



## **BeefTalk: A Cow's-Eye-View of Weaning**

**By Kris Ringwall**, Extension Beef Specialist,  
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It's that time to say goodbye.

The summer was pleasant. You were a good calf. But I can tell by the chill in the air that the time draws near when the horses and riders will be coming to bring us home. The grass is not what it was earlier in the year. It seems like just yesterday when all 84 pounds of you arrived (the same weight as my first calf in 1990) in the dark of night on the ninth of March with no complications. The help was proud when their flashlight showed you up and nursing. A gentle moo told them all they needed to know, and they moved on to help a young heifer calving just below the hill.

As I get older, I appreciate a lighter birthweight. (In 11 years, the average birthweight has been 90 pounds.) I remember your 1994 brother. At 105 pounds, I had to more than sneeze to pop him out, but I was in my prime, a strong six years of age and boss of bunk number nine. Today, at 12, I'm holding my own.

This year, I was sure glad the grass was green and over our knees. I heard the rancher say the crested wheat was good this year, and the hired help even applied 50 pounds of nitrogen in early April to get us going. When we were let out into the summer native pastures, the trails were all familiar. Even that next generation of "know it alls" that took

over bunk nine had to ask for guidance through the wide open spaces of the northwest pasture.

I have truly learned the choice spots to graze and nurture a young growing heifer like yourself. The watering holes were soon learned by all your friends. The smell of summer grass was soothing and helped produce lots of milk for your well-being. As summer progressed, this became one of those dry years where we had to look a little harder to find the grass. That's probably why the riders came a little early this year. But grow you did.

I got your report card. You weighed in at 608 pounds, gained 2.14 pounds a day, framed in at 5.5 and weighed 2.48 pounds per day of age. I'm pleased at how you have performed and noticed you didn't get unruly when the herdsman gave you your vaccinations. That is a plus. I remember one of your sisters turning on the herdsman when she came out of the chute, and I haven't seen her since.

The crew mumbled something about disposition, and your father's temper, which your sister inherited.

Well, that was yesterday. Let's enjoy these next couple of weeks on the stubble fields. If history holds, once we are turned into the stubble, our final separation is not too far away. I noticed the word "replacement" on the comment section of your report card. The other heifers averaged 536 pounds, so that puts your ranking very high. And with a 5.5 frame score, you will fit in fine.

My advice to you: Eat a balanced diet. Watch your weight gain over the winter. And when you see anybody with a pipette in their hand in the spring, do what I do and wiggle your ears.

Well, I can feel Junior doing a few cartwheels getting ready for next spring's delivery, so we better get back to eating. I would like to maintain my current weight at 1,250 and a condition score of 6. At my age, I don't want to give the crew any reason to look twice.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at [www.BeefTalk.com](http://www.BeefTalk.com). For more information, contact the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to [www.CHAPS2000.COM](http://www.CHAPS2000.COM) on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT011.

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**Source:** Kris Ringwall, (701) 483-2045

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<b>Weaning Report Card</b>		<b>● Calf # K132</b>
<b>Trait</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Birth Weight	84 pounds	<b>A</b>
Weaning Weight	608 pounds	<b>A</b>
Average Daily Gain	2.14 pounds	<b>B</b>
Frame Score	5.5	<b>A</b>
Weight per day of age	2.48 pounds	<b>B</b>
Comments	Sort to replacement pen	

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