



WEBINAR PRESENTED ON JANUARY 11, 2022



Why Heifer Maturity Matters: The Peter Pan Problem

Dr. Gavin Staley

Breeding heifers to calve younger (21 months or less) has been a trend in the dairy industry. There are potential benefits to having heifers calve younger. Dr. Staley identifies these as: 1) Beginning milk production earlier, 2) Reducing heifer inventory (reduce cost plus environmental benefits) and 3) Lower heifer feed cost. However, **Dr. Staley challenges this thinking in this Real Science Lecture.**

According to Dr. Staley there are significant costs associated with having heifers calve too early, that is, not having achieved **specific growth targets** relative to mature body weight (MBW).

In ***Why Heifer Maturity Matters: The Peter Pan Problem*** Dr. Staley addresses the downside to trying to get heifers into production physiologically too young. Using his many years of working directly with dairies and his extensive database of DairyComp 305 files he demonstrates:

- › Heifer milk production in week 10 *sets the annual average milk production of the entire herd.*
- › There is a significant and consistent difference between week 5 milk production of heifers and second lactation cows (Holsteins), and more.
- › Age *and* size at freshening impacts heifer 1st lactation production *and* her 2nd lactation as well.
- › That there are specific and long-term negative effects on heifer performance.

Dr. Staley concludes by providing recommendations to producers and nutritionists on how to focus on heifer growth to achieve **healthy mature heifers.**

Dr. Staley does an excellent job in ***Why Heifer Maturity Matters: The Peter Pan Problem*** of walking through this compelling data. In doing so it gives insight into why it may be important to challenge conventional wisdoms on heifer rearing.



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