



FACT SHEET

Making an Informed Decision on Creep Feeding

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Creep feeding can be a cost effective management practice that has the potential to pay dividends under certain conditions.

QUICK TIPS

Feed Efficiency

- Feed efficiency with creep feed will average 7:1 to 10:1 with free choice access
- Better efficiency can be obtained (5:1) if calf access is limited
- Intake can be limited by adding salt, limit intake to 2.0lbs/day
- 13-15% C.P. is adequate
- Use in conjunction with a high quality forage
- Complicated vitamin/mineral premixes are not required

Creep Mixes

- There are as many creep mixes as there are grain types, rations based on corn or grain plus protein are available upon request
- You need to be flexible and adjust creep with pasture conditions
- Feed a protein creep when: Quality is low
- Protein will increase forage intake by 15% and digestibility by 20%
- Feed an energy creep when: Quantity is low, will decrease forage intake

When to Use Creep Feeding

- The most obvious use of creep feed is when pasture quality and quantity decline
- Use in the absence of top quality preserved forage for fall calving herds
- Creep can be used at 3-4 weeks pre-weaning as part of a pre-conditioning program to decrease incidence of stress related illness
- When there are a high percentage of first or second calf dams it may be useful to use creep. Burden will be lessened on the mothers in this situation and help the calves
- When grain prices are low relative to current or anticipate calf prices (*see example, next page*)

Economic Example

- You need to calculate cost/lb gain with fudge factor (labour, equipment, etc) and compare this figure to calf price

Example:

Barley	45%	\$165/tonne	7.5¢/lb
Oats	45%	\$150/tonne	6.8¢/lb
SBM	10%	\$310/tonne	14.1¢/lb

7.85¢/lb at 8:1 F.E. = C62.8¢/lb gain

- Your cost for labour, equipment, etc. will come in approximately 20¢/lb gain; therefore, the price of the calf will need to be greater than 88¢/lb to justify feeding creep. If it isn't, don't do it!
- Creep feeding is also related to calving time and breeding, and lactation peaks

Making the Decision

- Creep can complicate decisions, ie. by choosing heifer calves as replacements
- Maternal abilities are distorted as it becomes difficult to determine where the calf growth is coming from
- Calves can be discounted as feeders if they flesh out too much from the creep
- Many feedlots will shy away from creep fed calves because of the loss of compensatory gain advantage

Throughout this factsheet we have given you the background needed to make an informed decision on creep feeding your animals. We wish you luck with your feeding choices.

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