



## Creep Feeding Management Tips



### Never Let Your Calves Have A Bad Day

1. Don't put the creep feeder in the pasture until you are ready to put creep feed in it. Calves have a natural curiosity and will "check it out". Leaving an empty feeder in the pasture trains calves to avoid the feeder.
2. Be sure cattle actually see you put creep feed in the feeders when the feeder is placed in the pasture. If cattle are not around or in sight, they may not find the feeder for a long time.
3. Place the creep feeder initially at a location where cows congregate such as near water, shade, or a mineral station.
4. Don't fill the feeder initially. Put a small amount of creep feed in the feeder at first so it will stay fresh.
5. Don't open the slide on the feed troughs too wide. Slides should be opened 1-2 finger widths. Wide open slides wastes feed and causes fines to accumulate.
6. Check feeders after rain showers and remove wet feed from the trough. Wet feed will mold and plug up the feeder.
7. Include an ionophore in the creep feed to improve feed utilization and reduce incidence of coccidiosis. Research has also demonstrated ionophores can reduce incidence of bloat and acidosis.
8. Make sure the area inside the creep panels is large enough for calves to maneuver. If calves can't turn around, they can get trapped in the creep feed area, overeat, and die.
9. The creep feeder doesn't have to stay in the same location all summer. Moving the creep feeder away from high traffic areas after calves are eating well can lower intake and improve grazing distribution.
10. Don't let feeders run empty especially in late season when calves are eating well.

#### Creep Feed Economics Worksheet

- A. Number of Calves..... (A.)
- B. Expected ADG without creep feed (Usually 1.8 to 2.25 lbs./day) ..... (B.)
- C. Days of creep feeding ..... (C.)
- D. Feeding rate of creep feed (Usually 4 - 7 lbs./day) ..... (D.)
- E. Gain advantage from creep feeding (Usually .3 to .5 lbs./day)..... (E.)
- F. Gain advantage from using an ionophore in the Creep feed = 11.1% x Line B ..... (F.)
- G. Total gain improvement from creep feeding (lbs./day) = Line E + Line F ..... (G.)
- H. Total gain per creep feeding period (lbs.) = Line C x Line G ..... (H.)
- I. Improved calf value from creep feeding = Line H x expected calf sale price \$ \_\_\_\_\_ / lbs. .... (I.)
- J. Total pounds of LAND O LAKES FARMLAND CREEP FEED fed = Line C x Line D ..... (J.)
- K. Investment in LAND O LAKES FARMLAND CREEP FEED with ionophore = creep feed price \_\_\_\_\_ \$/ton divided by 2000 x Line J ..... (K.)
- L. Net return per calf from feeding LAND O LAKES FARMLAND CREEP FEED with ionophore = Line I - Line K ..... (L.)
- M. Net creep feeding return per operation = Line A x Line L ..... (M.)

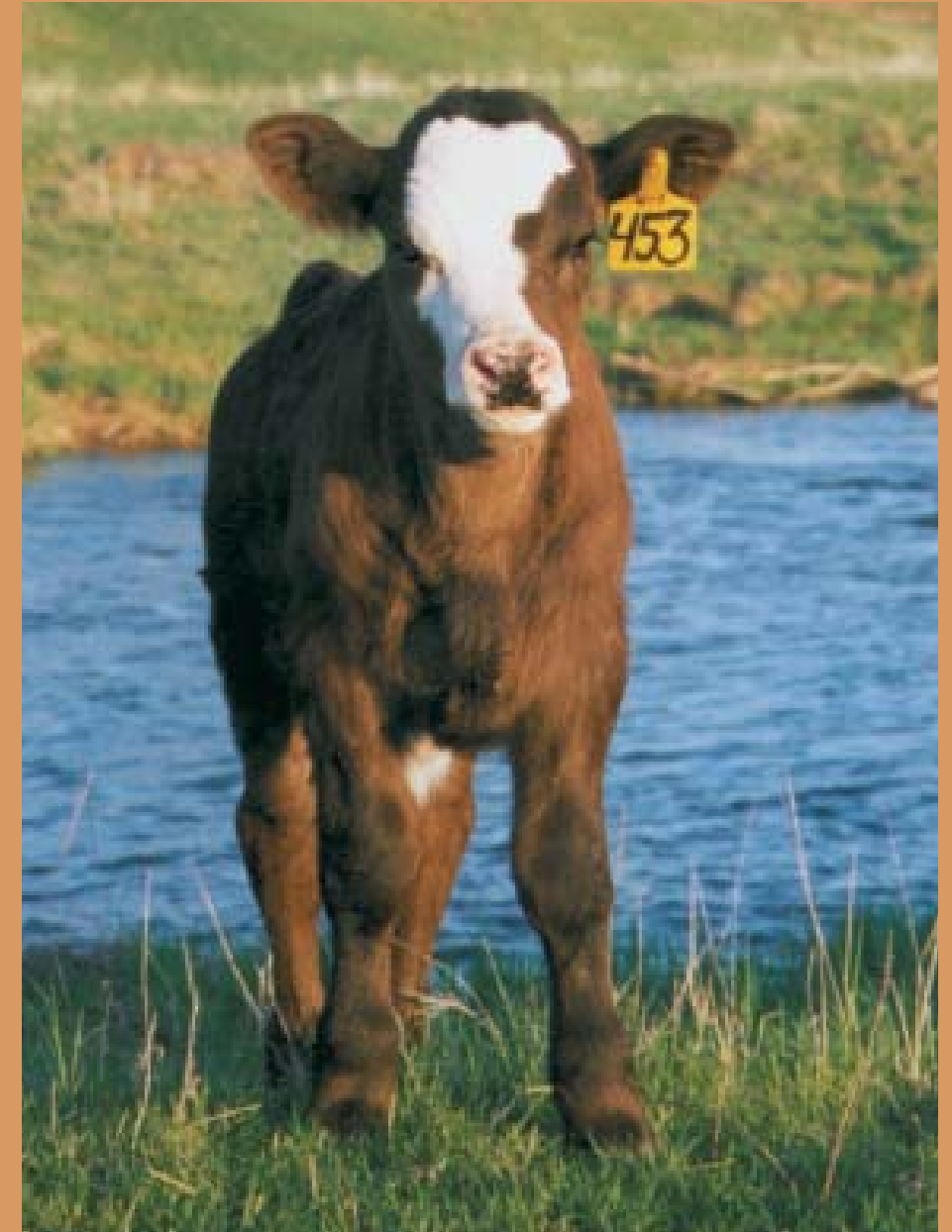


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CreepFeed

# CREEP FEED

**For Heavier Calves  
at Weaning**



**LAND O LAKES®**  
**Feed**





## Creep Feeding for Heavier Calves



Weaning weight, next to calving percentage, has the greatest economic impact on pre-weaning calf development.

Each year, at about calving time, cattlemen ask the question – will it pay to creep feed my calves in view of the current cattle and grain prices?

When calf prices are low and feed grain prices are high, it's usually unprofitable to creep feed calves that are nursing. **However, if the increase in weight plus the increase in grade (selling price per pound) is enough, it will more than pay for the grain and labor.**

Table 1. Break-even Chart for Creep Feed at Different Values of Calf Gain and Feed Conversion				
Value of Calf Wt. Gain \$/Lb.	Lb. Creep per Lb. of Added Gain			
	3	6	9	12
Break-even Creep Feed Cost, \$/Cwt				
.70	23.3	11.7	7.8	5.8
.80	26.7	13.3	8.9	6.7
.90	30.0	15.0	10.0	7.5
1.00	33.0	16.7	11.1	8.3
1.10	36.0	18.4	12.2	9.1
1.20	39.0	20.1	13.3	9.9

Michigan State University

**Creep Feeding Definition:** Feeding for maximum growth of bone and muscle without laying down fat.

Any excess fat laid down early in the calf's life will increase cost later because fat laid down early must be maintained. However, with current genetics of many larger framed, fast growing cattle, it is unusual to deposit excess fat.

Producers need to know what will be done with their calves. This will help make the decision as to whether or not they will want to creep feed. Key questions to answer are:

- Am I going to grow and finish the calves off myself?
- Am I going to sell the calves as lightweight fats on a special market?
- Are they going to be used as heifer replacements?
- Am I going to grow and sell them as feeders?

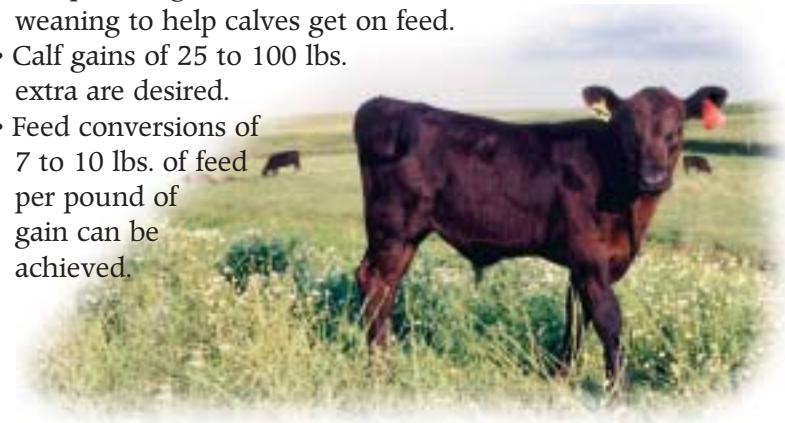
Most creep feed rations can be started as soon as the calves are old enough to eat dry feed. This may be as early as 4 weeks of age, however, it's usually 6 to

8 weeks of age. It depends on the milking ability of the cow and condition and quantity of forage available. Calves will consume the most palatable feeds first. This is usually milk, young grass, creep feed, and lastly, dry grass. Because calves consume the most palatable feeds first, it is critical that creep feeders be placed properly, checked regularly and intakes monitored.

Getting calves too fat is always a risk with unlimited creep feed. If this happens, it can result in price discounts on calves sold as weaned feeders. This can be prevented somewhat by matching energy content of the creep feed with frame size of the calves. In other words, as frame size goes up, energy concentration of the creep may be increased. Conversely with small framed calves, energy content should be reduced in order to prevent the calves from becoming too fat.

### Situations When Creep Feeding is Advantageous

- Calf prices are high relative to feed prices.
- Pastures begin to decline in quality or quantity.
- Dams are first or second calf heifers.
- Growth potential of calves are not being met with milk and natural forage.
- Calves are born in the fall making grazing impossible.
- Creep feeding is used 3 to 4 weeks before weaning to help calves get on feed.
- Calf gains of 25 to 100 lbs. extra are desired.
- Feed conversions of 7 to 10 lbs. of feed per pound of gain can be achieved.



## Creep Feeding for Heavier Calves



### Situations When Creep Feeding is a Disadvantage

- Price of feed is high in relation to calf prices.
- Pastures remain lush until weaning time.
- Calves are kept over for grazing as yearlings.
- Mothers are good milkers on good pasture. Cows usually give enough milk for the first 90 to 100 days.
- Smaller framed calves will be fatter and may bring less per pound as well as gain less if over-wintered.
- Replacement heifers may be fatter than desired. This is not likely if calves are large framed.
- Proper creep feeding equipment is not available or isn't properly used.

Table 2. Average Feed Consumption by Creep-Fed Calves		
Age of Calf (mos.)	Feed Consumption	
	Per Day (lb.)	Per Month
1-2	0.5	15
2-3	1.5	45
3-4	2.5	75
4-5	3.5	105
5-6	5.0	150
6-7	6.5	195
7-8	8.5	255

Oregon State

Table 3. Summary of 31 Trials With Free-Choice Feeding		
	Creep	No Creep
Total Gain, lb.	279	221
Daily Gain, lb.	1.83	1.45
Total Creep/Calf, lb.	524	--
Lb Creep/lb. Added Gain	9.0	--

Kansas State University

### Limit Feeding of Creep Feeds

#### Guidelines:

- Make a mid-protein creep feed.
- Limit intake to 2 to 3 lbs. per calf per day.

#### Advantages:

- Easier to limit feed intake.
- Still maintains efficiency.
- Minimizes risk for cattlemen.
- Moderate improvement in weaning weight without a noticeable increase in "fleshiness".
- Improved feed conversion compared to "unlimited" creep feeding.
- Calves become accustomed to eating grain prior to weaning and sale time resulting in less stress and improved post-weaning performance.

#### Disadvantages:

- Difficult to manage feed intake.
- Difficult to predict response.
- Gets very expensive if calves overeat the high-protein feed.
- A practice that adapts easier to smaller herds rather than to larger herds.

Table 4. Effects of Limit-Fed 16% Protein Creep on Calf Performance		
	Control	Limit-Fed Creep Plus Ionophore
No. of Calves	27	31
Initial Wt., Mid-August	290	308
Daily Creep	--	1.46
85 day ADG, lb.	1.53 <sup>a</sup>	1.84 <sup>b</sup>
Lb. Creep/lb. Added Gain	--	4.4

<sup>ab</sup>Means on a line with different superscripts (P<.05)

Trial Period – August-November

Kansas State University

### Managing Limit-Fed Creep Feeders

- Identify optimum feed location. Calves will not look for it.
- Start limited creep feeding in mid to late summer when pastures become less productive (1 to 3 months prior to weaning).
- Start with no salt or very little salt (2%).
- Monitor consumption and adjust salt level (3 to 10%) to maintain daily intakes of 1.5 to 3.0 lbs. per calf per day. Maintenance of desirable intake levels will require frequent monitoring and adjustment of salt levels.
- Put out creep feed 2 or 3 times each week.
- It is alright if the feeder is empty for a day or so.
- Limit intake to 1.5 to 3.0 lbs. per calf per day for mid-protein level creep feeds.