

# The Latest Across the Plains

## Timely Reminders

- ◆ Clean water sources on a weekly basis.
- ◆ Keep an eye on commodity contract prices the next two months.
- ◆ Have us sample hay and silage (silage greater than 3 weeks after harvest).
- ◆ Start thinking about pre-weaning calf diets.
- ◆ Re-implant cattle with the current high beef prices.
- ◆ Contact your nutritionist about running projections on growing or finishing cattle, beef or Holstein, to help plan feedstuffs needs.

## Unused Feed

“You can’t have a million dollar dream with a minimum wage work ethic” ~Author Unknown

## Save Money \$\$\$ Test Your Feeds

Tests are relatively inexpensive, usually costing less than \$18, for the information derived. Contact our office to set up an appointment to have us pull feed samples if we have not done so yet.

## What’s New in the Industry

Do not place NHTC cattle in feedlots until further notice.

COMING SOON: GPLC will be releasing a breakeven buyer’s sheet based on current COG and live cattle futures.

## We want to hear from you...

Do you have a question you would like one of the nutritionists to address in depth in our newsletter? Just submit your question through our website [www.GPLC-Inc.com](http://www.GPLC-Inc.com) and we will get to work on it.

## Calendar of Events

- **July 15** NCBA Summer Conference, Denver, CO
- **July 17-19** Four State Farm Show, Pittsburg, KS
- **July 17-25** Cheyenne Frontier Days, Cheyenne, WY
- **July 17-25** North Dakota State Fair, Minot, ND
- **July 24-Aug 1** Montana State Fair, Great Falls, MT
- **July 29-Aug 2** Dodge City Roundup Rodeo, Dodge City, KS
- **Aug 8** Southern Plains Beef Symposium, Ardmore, OK
- **Aug 8-15** Wyoming State Fair, Douglas, WY
- **Aug 13-23** Iowa State Fair, Des Moines, IA
- **Aug 13-23** Missouri State Fair, Sedalia, MO
- **Aug 13-23** Illinois State Fair, Springfield, IL
- **Aug 18** Dakotafest, Mitchell, SD
- **Aug 25-27** Midwest Ag Industries Expo, Bloomington, IL
- **Aug 25-27** Wisconsin Farm Technology Days, Sun Prairie, WI
- **Aug 27-Sept 7** Minnesota State Fair, St. Paul, MN
- **Aug 28-Sept 7** Nebraska State Fair, Grand Island, NE
- **Aug 28-Sept 7** Colorado State Fair, Pueblo, CO
- **Sept 1** Labor Day
- **Sept 1-3** Farm Progress Show, Decatur, IL
- **Sept 3-7** South Dakota State Fair, Huron, SD
- **Sept 17-18** Eng Cow/Calf Symposium, Oklahoma City, OK

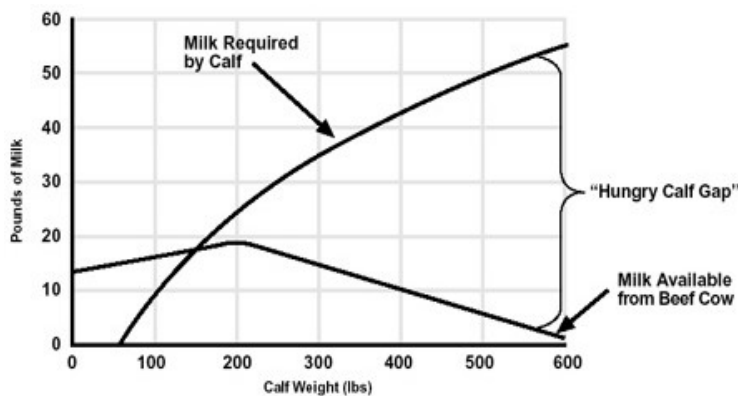


## Creep Feeding—When Does It Pay?

By Dan Larson, Ph.D., Nutritionist

Creep feed is one of the most misunderstood, and perhaps overused, feeding strategies in cow/calf production. The so called “Hungry Calf Gap” is typically used as a justification for selling creep feed, even when calf prices are low and feed prices are high.

**Figure 1. Milk yield of a typical beef cow vs. nutrient requirements of a nursing calf.**



There can be no argument that milk production and calf requirements diverge around 200-300 lb of calf weight. However, during that same period, calves are becoming fully functional ruminants, capable of converting the available forage resources to pounds of body weight. The available forage may be grass or a TMR in a drylot. Either way, creep feed is not the only source of supplemental nutrition. This is clearly evident by observing young calves in a drylot consuming TMR at the bunk with their dams. Please understand that the purpose of this article is not to discourage producers from using creep feed. Rather, the main take away should be to use creep feed to add extra pounds on calves when that weight is more valuable than the cost of feed and feeding and when it doesn't cause any long term negative impacts.

Research into creep feeding has both proven and dispelled perceptions about the importance of creep feeding. Creep feeding does improve average daily gain (ADG) of calves. Research conducted by Oklahoma State University in the 1980's revealed an improvement in ADG between 0.17 and 0.25 lb/day. Additional research suggests a slightly higher rate of gain, up to an additional 0.75 lb/day, depending upon feed intake. Feed conversion of creep fed calves is good, not great. Average feed conversion of creep feed is between 5:1 and 7:1 lb of feed per extra lb gained. Generally, high protein creep feeds

promote a better feed conversion rate because the added protein helps calves better utilize forages. High protein creeps also promote slightly lower creep intake, again improving efficiency. Whenever possible, avoid high starch levels in creep feed because high starch levels in the rumen interfere with forage digestion, resulting in poorer overall feed conversion.

Faulkner et al. (1994) conducted a study where calves were creep fed with a corn based supplement or a soybean hull based supplement. Average daily gain was improved by at least 0.50 lb/day compared to no creep, depending on intake. However, when creep intake was limited, the efficiency of gain was improved by 33% over non-limited controls. Research indicates that creep intake of about 1.5% of body weight is maximally efficient for high protein, high fiber creep feeds. The same body of research by Faulkner demonstrated no negative impact of creep feeding subsequent feedlot performance or efficiency. Creep feeding, especially with a high starch creep, increased quality grade by 5% over non-supplemented controls. However, the same result can be obtained with early weaning and feeding a higher starch diet.

Creep feeding is often turned toward during drought situations or in the case of young and/or thin cows. The expectation is that creep feeding will reduce milk intake, which is simply not true. If a calf consumed more feed but less milk, ADG would not change. The Oklahoma State data show virtually no difference in milk consumption between creep fed and non-creep fed calves. It is true that creep feeding, especially with a high starch creep feed, will reduce forage consumption by calves. This is less true with high protein creeps. However, the reduction in forage consumed by calves is not likely high enough to have a major impact on pasture availability, especially in light of creep feed costs.

A major drawback of creep feeding is over fattening young calves, especially heifers. Research from Illinois State University (Buskirk et al, 1996) revealed that creep feeding has a negative long term impact on heifer productivity. In this case, unlimited creep intake drove 0.60 extra lb/head/day of ADG. As a consequence, milk production of creep fed heifers after calving was 20% lower than non-creep fed counterparts. In accordance with milk production, calf weaning weight of their offspring was lower as well. The take away from these data is to not creep feed replacement heifers, and if you must do so, limit feed intake of a high protein (14-16%) creep feed to avoid developing fat in the udder.

A major benefit of creep feeding as observed by this author is easing the weaning stress of home raised calves. It appears that calves who learn to consume concentrate feedstuffs prior to weaning wean easier and start on feed more quickly. If creep feeders are used, with a limiter, simply pull the feeder in with calves for the first 5-7 days of weaning, and then begin



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adapting the cattle to the bunk. This method allows the calf to consume needed energy and protein during the stressful period and may reduce some health problems. I suggest placing creep feeders 30 days prior to weaning to acclimate calves to feed and to encourage reasonable feed consumption.

The ultimate decision to creep feed needs to be based on economics. We'll use the following assumptions: 7:1 feed conversion, \$325/ton creep feed, \$2.80/lb for a 600 lb calf. Based on these assumptions, it will cost \$1.14/lb of gain to feed creep, so each lb of creep fed will make you money. However, this does not take into account the labor, equipment and potential marketing (overfat cattle) problems potentially associated with creep feed. Each producer must analyze those economics in their own herd. In closing, don't assume creep feeding fits each operation. Rather, evaluate the decision critically, keep the pitfalls in mind, and carefully evaluate the economics when making the decision to creep feed.

## Lameness in the Breeding Herd

*By Luke Miller, MS, Nutritionist*

Hoof health remedies and prevention strategies are a common conversation piece in the feedlot world. Hoof health is just as important in the breeding herd, but the primary reason there has been less focus historically on this in the cow/calf sector is that cattle tend to be spread out in larger pastures where high concentrations of bacteria are not present. However, a number of environmental and nutritional factors can impact the incidence of lameness.

One of the primary causes of poor hoof health is excessive moisture. Typically, late summer months are a time when pasture cattle get a break from mud and moisture, allowing feet to harden back up before winter. In many areas, spring rains appear to be making their way into mid-summer, which is great for forage growth but obviously leads to more mud than is preferred. As we get into the heat of summer and flies become more problematic, cattle naturally will bunch up under shade or near water, causing areas of deep mud. Too much time spent standing in mud and water will keep hooves soft, causing them to become more susceptible to bruising and infection. Time spent standing in excessive amounts of urine and feces will exacerbate these issues to an even greater extent due to the presence of more bacteria.

There are a number of management practices that may help alleviate some of these issues. Rotating cattle more frequently will not only keep cattle on more vegetative grass, but will also allow high traffic areas to dry up briefly and decrease bacterial concentrations. Pastures don't necessarily need to

be rotated twice-a-day, but even once every week or two can lead to visible differences. Putting lime in areas where cattle spend a lot of time, such as in gateways, near mineral feeders, and around water tanks is another good practice. Large rock is often used in these areas to prevent erosion and mud, but can be extremely hard on feet. Laying lime on top of the rock will not only give cattle a better surface to walk on, but, because it has a high pH, it will also help alleviate some of the negative effects caused from cattle standing in acidic environments caused by urine and feces. Keep cattle fenced out of ponds and creeks as much as possible. In pastures where only one or two areas of shade are present, consider putting in more shades that are mobile so that they may be moved from time to time. When clearing trees in standing timber to create more pasture, it is a good idea to leave a number of medium sized trees scattered throughout the pasture rather than a few clusters here and there. The more room cattle have to spread out and still be in shade, the more comfortable they will be.

Producers who live in fescue country are no stranger to fescue foot. Fescue foot is caused by decreased blood flow to the extremities, which is one of the side-effects of endophyte, produced by the ergot fungus present in Kentucky 31 Fescue. Healthy fescue plants tend to have high levels of ergot and anything that can be done to help alleviate some of the negative effects of fescue toxicosis should be considered. While dilution is the most effective method to reduce ergot levels consumed by cattle, it is not always a feasible option. A tool that may be used in these situations is providing a supplement containing an effective vasodilator, which may significantly increase blood flow.

A popular idea in the cow/calf industry right now is increasing intensification of the cow herd by running more cows in confinement or semi-confinement. As cattle concentrations increase in a given area, so will bacteria concentrations. We can expect to see an increase in foot-rot and other hoof related issues in the beef cow herd just as we have in the dairy and feedlot industries over the past few decades. Typically, feed-grade antibiotics have been a good tool to fight bacterial infections. However, these products will be more difficult to obtain in the future. The more that can be done to prevent these issues from occurring will be critical. Utilizing a sound mineral program can play a huge part in a prevention program. Calcium and phosphorus are very important for hoof health. Iodine should be included at a high rate, and in severe cases biotin should be considered. A high quality organic zinc source can be an extremely beneficial tool in terms of helping prevent and overcome hoof health issues. Please don't hesitate to contact your GPLC nutritionist if you would like to discuss any of these concerns that may be pertinent to your operation.



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