



A NEWSLETTER OF DAKOTALAND FEEDS

Does Creep Feeding Still Pay?

We get asked this question often and especially this year, the answer is an emphatic **yes**. Creep feeding is one of the best ways to add weight to your calves and pounds are paying big time.

There has never been a time when creep feeding pays as well as it does right now! Even with a very aggressive market slide, you still come out \$100 per head better for creep feeding

after paying for the creep feed. With a cost of gain around \$0.75/lb for creep feed and calves worth over \$3.00/lb, it just makes sense. Spend \$0.75 and get \$3.00 in return? I would do that all day long.

But, there is a difference in what people consider creep feed. To be clear, creep feed is supplement to a nursing calf. We have demonstration trials showing a 5:1 conversion on Rangeland® Calf Creep, which is a fiber-based creep feed. Many times in research, it has been some kind of mixed grain and protein supplement or maybe just oats in self-feeders. Other times, it could mean a pelleted feed, but even those products are not all the same. At Dakotaland Feeds, the Rangeland® Creep Feed is a fiber-based creep feed made from wheat midds and soy hulls which gives it a low total starch content but makes it very high in digestible fiber. This enhances the forage the calves are already consuming and results in what is called a 'positive associative effect' because the calves will gain more than predicted because of the complimentary benefits of the feed being consumed.

When high-starch feeds (like corn, oats, barley, and wheat) are fed to a nursing calf that is also consuming forage, the rumen microbes need to change to digest more starch instead of forage. But then the calf goes back to eating forage, and the rumen microbes need to shift back to digesting fiber and roughage. This back-and-forth causes a 'negative associative effect' and calves gain less than predicted because of the inefficiency of the rumen microbes to extract energy from the feed. This is the reason that the Rangeland® Calf Creep works so well.

One other way to supply calves with additional nutrients is to provide a limiter with grain. The limiter piece is very important because we want the calves to eat small amounts of grain so as not to start drastically shifting the rumen microbial population. By eating small but more frequent amounts of grain mix (like Accuration® Range Supplement 33 and corn), we increase total caloric intake and enhance weight gain without causing the shift to digesting large amounts of starch. By keeping intakes low, we avoid getting the calves overly fleshy and also control costs. Calves need to be used to consuming regular creep feed before starting to feed them a limiter or they will not eat much at all.

There is a right way and a wrong way to use both creep feed and Accuration® blends. These products were not meant to be a total ration by themselves. If calves are eating 1.5-2.5% of bodyweight in creep feed, it is time to wean the calves and get them on a ration because our target is really around 1%. If calves are eating more than 1.5% of an Accuration mix while still on the cow, it is

In a Nutshell:

- Creep feeding has never paid better than right now
- Rangeland® Calf Creep is a fiber-based creep feed
- Fiber that is digestible enhances gains
- High starch feeds reduce gains
- Limiters mean small starch meals that can improve gain
- Target intakes of around 1% of bodyweight
- Don't restrict nutrient intake if you want big calves

it is time to increase the limiter before the calves get overly fleshy. The other challenge you may have is transitioning the calves to a bunk ration after being on a limiter. If they have started consuming a lot of grain, going back to a lower energy ration (like a traditional starter ration) in the bunk will mean the calves are not going to continue gaining as they have been. They may look like they aren't growing at all for a little while. If we start calves on a slightly higher energy ration than the typical 46 MCal starter ration, the calves can keep gaining and growing without stalling out.

You don't wean calves that weigh 700+ pounds by restricting nutrient intake to 'just grass and mama's milk.' If we want calves that grow to their full potential, we can't have anything holding them back. They need to have every nutritional piece in place to achieve that. If you want your calves to express the genetic potential that you have invested in over the years, then give them the opportunity to do it by creep feeding. We can never get a calf to outperform its genetic capabilities, but we can certainly fall far short of that by not giving them what they need. Today's market tells us we would be foolish if we didn't creep feed today. We have Cadillac genetics. Don't refuse to put gas in the tank. Talk to your local Dakotaland Feeds dealer about getting creep feed to your calves for maximum gain.

Roxanne Knock, PhD

What do you need to be thinking about this time of year?

- Get your creep feeders in shape to put out in pastures and **get creep feed out for spring-born calves.**
- Keep mineral in place for the cows on pasture.
- Feed **Clarifly®** or **Altosid®** to control fly populations.
- Implant calves at branding time.
- Get prepared for heat stress for cattle in the lots—shades, sprinklers, extra water tanks, etc.
- Ask about Intense Calf WSC mixer for orphaned calves.
- Order wasps for feedlot fly control or ask about **Clarifly®** for feed-through fly control in the feedlot.
- Make sure the bulls have mineral, too! Stress Tubs® or Ultimate Breeder® mineral provide the Availa-4® mineral.
- Have a breeding soundness exam and semen test done on your bulls to help ensure high pregnancy rates.
- Watch for signs of anaplasmosis in your herd—older cows are typically more affected.

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