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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Reasons to Creep Feed

Over the years I have had several people talk about creep feeding. Some think it is the only way to go while others will debate it is useless. I have heard nutritionist discuss the fact that it helps the calf, but does nothing for the cow as some may think it will take pressure or demand of the calf for milk off of the cow. The calf will nurse as long as and as much as mom produces. Creep feeding does nothing to change that.

However, creep feeding does have some benefits for the calf. Below are five reasons to creep feed as was recently found in the Beef Blog that was written by Cody Schneider for Progressive Cattleman, but here are some of my observations first.

I have written about pre-conditioning and weaning feeder calves for years. Preparing “YOUR” calves for the next stage of their life is something we all need to think about before we sell them. The next producer who buys “YOUR” calves needs to be getting calves ready to perform (that means being healthy and grow). Calves that are prepared properly will have a vaccination program for health and know what feed is. Would you like to be buying calves that come into the ring at the local stockyards that have never been vaccinated or seen a bite of feed other than grass and mom’s milk? How many times would you buy cattle like that? What would you be willing to pay for these cattle, weaned on the truck as they are hauled to the yards? I would not want them if I had the opportunity to buy calves that are not bawling for mommy, vaccinated and healthy, and know what feed is and go straight to the bunk and start eating when I unload them at home. Put yourself on both sides of the auction, think like both the seller and the buyer and think about introducing “YOUR” calves to feed so the buyer has one less think to deal with when he unloads his calves that he bought from you.

Creep feeding teaches calves to eat and prepares them for the next stage of production. These five benefits of creep feeding help add value to the calf for the customer in the next segment and improve profitability of the cow-calf operation.

1. **Post-weaning performance:** First and foremost, you are teaching cattle to eat. Calves consuming creep feed adapt to the bunk more quickly after weaning and being transported. For this reason, they typically recover weight lost during shipping and transport in a shorter period of time. If cattle are being preconditioned or fed in a backgrounding facility, this can have a dramatic impact on profitability during this stage of production.



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2. **Fewer health problems post-weaning:** Offering creep feed for the last few weeks before weaning has been shown to reduce the incidence of sickness in newly received feeder cattle. This reduction is probably due to reduced nutritional stress.
3. **Control coccidiosis:** Severe coccidia outbreaks can be devastating and lead to additional health problems. Providing a coccidiostat in the creep feed before weaning will help prevent coccidia from being an underlying problem once cattle are weaned.
4. **Increase weaning weight:** Creep feeding increases weaning weight, which translates to more pounds of calf to sell. The cost of these extra pounds is highly variable and, as with any expense, must be managed properly. It is imperative that cattle are not allowed to overeat once they get larger and are less dependent on milk. In most cases, creep feed should serve as a supplement to the grass and not as a complete forage replacement. Creep feeding with the correct type of feed is key to profitability.
5. **Insurance:** Providing creep feed can be an insurance policy to help reduce variability of weaning weights. Forage quantity and quality can vary dramatically from year to year. If forage is short early on, then milk production may suffer and creep feed can help small calves. Likewise, creep feed can bridge the gap for larger calves in late summer when forage quality may be declining and calves are more reliant on forage to promote weight gain.

Dates to Remember

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| August 23 | Beef and Forage Field Night in Jackson at the OARDC Research Facility on SR 93 about a mile south of SR 32, small charge for the meal that begins around 5:00 p.m. Please call in advance if you wish to attend. More details in next week's column. |
| August 28 | Beef Quality Assurance Training at the Union Stockyards in Hillsboro at 6:30 p.m. |
| Sept. 13 | Beef Quality Assurance Training at the United Producers Stockyards in Hillsboro at 6:30 p.m. |
| Sept. 18-20 | Farm Science Review. Tickets are now available in the OSU Extension Office. |
| October 25 | Beef Quality Assurance Training at the United Producers Stockyards in Hillsboro at 6:30 p.m. |