



Creep Feeding

Creep feeding is the practice of feeding a solid diet to piglets whilst they are suckling the sow, preparing their digestive system for weaning. Creep feeding initiates and promotes gut and digestive enzyme development, which enables the piglet to digest nutrients from food sources other than that of milk. This encourages feed intake, which is one of the greatest challenges to post-weaning performance.

Creep feeding becomes increasingly important and beneficial as weaning age increases. As piglets grow their demand for nutrients similarly grows and with increasing age this demand outstrips the capacity of the sow to supply them, as the sow's milk yield peaks at around 3 weeks and then slowly declines.



To create a smooth check-free transition at weaning, maintaining gut health and integrity

To improve post-weaning growth by 20 g/day

To improve post-weaning FCR by 0.1

To improve net return by £1 - 2/pig sold

The basics of good creep feeding

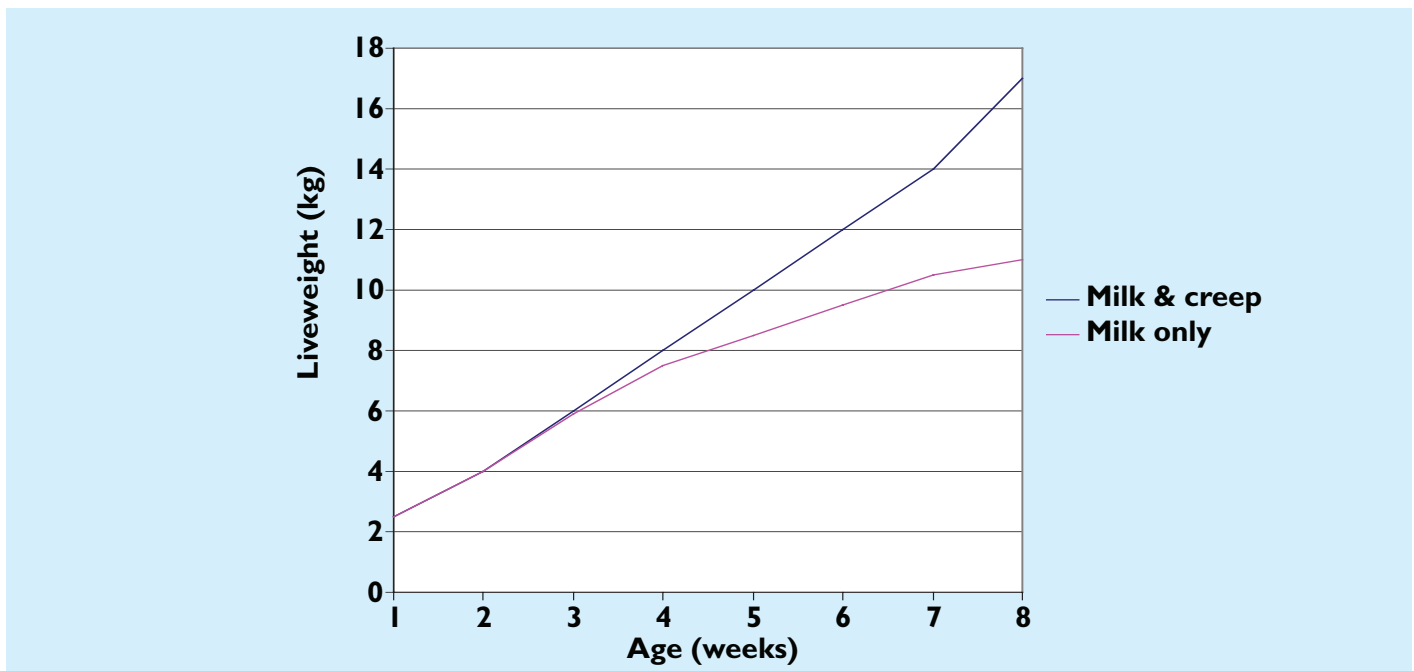
- Keep creep feed fresh and clean and out of reach of the sow.
- Start creep feeding at 10 -14 days of age, or at least 10 days prior to weaning.
- Begin by offering creep on a flat surface. The floor can be used if solid, if not, use a mat or shallow tray (heavy metal or plastic trays that can hook into the slats). Mats should only be used to 'start' pigs eating.
- Place trays or mats close to the piglets, but not under or on direct heat as this will turn the feed stale too quickly; also keep feed away from the dunging area.
- Begin with very small amounts replaced at least twice a day, preferably more. Always remove all uneaten creep. Unmedicated waste creep can be fed to the sow.
- Offer creep when the sows are feeding as piglets are active and unlikely to be suckled for some time.
- Do not overfeed, feed to appetite. Litters often eat little and then suddenly begin to eat increasing amounts.
- Introduce small troughs or top up the trays more often if litters are eating well.
- Any fouled trays or troughs should be cleaned thoroughly.
- Improved water availability improves creep feed intake; always make sure that there is an adequate supply of clean fresh water available.
- Store creep diet bags in a cool place and always close bags to prevent feed taking up the farrowing house odours and/or becoming rancid.
- Be committed – creep feeding is more successful the more time and effort is devoted to it.
- Remember the importance of the sow: under normal UK industry practice, where weaning takes place at 4 weeks, she will be providing the majority of the piglet's nutrition and every producer should be single minded in the pursuit of maximising milk yield. Utilisation of creep feed should always be considered as a supplement for increased benefit rather than a replacement for milk.



Typical and target creep feed intakes

Weaning age (days)	Creep feed intake (g/pig)	
	Target	Typical
24	350	200
28	700	400
32	1200	800
35	2500	1500

Piglet growth on sow milk only and sow milk plus creep feed



Source: English

The benefit of creep feeding from day 7 to weaning at 28 days

	Advantage over control %
Suckling Period (0-28 days)	
Daily Gain 7 - 28 days	+ 7
Daily Gain 21 - 28 days	+ 17
Post-weaning (29 - 47 days)	
Feed Intake	+ 6
Daily Gain	+ 15
Post-weaning (48 - 69 days)	
Feed Intake	+ 5
Daily Gain	+ 5

Source: English

Increasing weaning weight and daily feed intake post weaning as a result of good creep feeding results in increased daily gain and improved food conversion ratio post weaning, delivering a net margin benefit of £1.20/pig. Lifetime benefit in growing pig performance can be expected resulting in a net margin benefit of £1-2/pig sold or pigs being sold 3 days sooner.

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