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Effects of Creep Feeding and Post-weaning Ration on Calf Performance

J. H. Warren, E. F. Smith, R. R. Schalles,
Loren Berger, and G. Fink

Summary

We found no advantage for creep feeding calves for either all summer or 37 days prior to weaning. All calves were with their dams on native pasture. Calves not creep fed or creep fed only 37 days before weaning were sick less after weaning than those creep fed all summer.

Rate of gain for 21 days after weaning was as good on a low energy weaning ration as on a high energy ration. However, more sickness occurred on the low energy ration.

Experimental Procedure

One hundred forty-two Polled Hereford calves were randomly allotted within sex, age of dam, and sire. Calves were born in March and April and were with their dams on native Bluestem pasture. Thirty-six calves were creep fed starting on June 17 and continuing through weaning on October 2. Thirty-three calves were creep fed from August 26 through weaning (37 days), while 73 calves were not creep fed. At weaning all calves were trucked approximately six miles and assigned to four lots according to their pre-weaning treatment. Three lots: creep last 37 days; no creep; and creep all summer were self-fed a higher energy ration of 60% dehydrated alfalfa-40% milo ration (70% TDN). These calves were fed approximately 4.25 lbs. of prairie hay per day for the first two days. The fourth lot was non-creep fed calves self-fed a lower energy ration (63% TDN) of 30% rolled oats, 30% cracked milo and 15% soybean meal, plus 25% prairie hay hand fed daily.

Weight and days sick were analyzed by least squares procedures. The model included type of creep feeding, type of post-weaning ration, sex of calf, age of calf at weaning, age of dam, and sire.

Results and Discussion

Table 2.1 gives performance results for the pre-weaning and post-weaning treatments. Creep feeding did not affect ($P < .05$) weaning weight or post-weaning performance. All calves lost weight the first week after weaning. Bull calves were 7% heavier ($P < .01$) at weaning and gained more weight ($P < .01$) during the post-weaning trial. Calves receiving the high energy ration tended to maintain heavier average weights during the post-weaning period.

Calves receiving no creep feed or creep feed only 37 days were sick less days post-weaning ($P<.05$) than calves receiving creep feed all summer. Calves on the high energy ration averaged less days sick ($P<.05$) than those on the low energy ration. Bull calves were sick more days ($P<.01$) than heifers (1.4 vs. 0.74 days) during the post-weaning trial.

No advantage for creep feeding either for long periods (all summer) or short periods (37 days prior to weaning) was demonstrated. Calves receiving no creep feed weaned as heavy as creep fed calves, and both gained equally during post-weaning. Calves fed no creep had less sickness post-weaning than calves creep fed all summer. The low energy post-weaning ration produced results comparable with the high energy ration.

Table 2.1. Performance of Calves Receiving Indicated Pre-weaning and Post-weaning Rations.

Variable	Pre-weaning Treatment			Post-weaning	
	Creep 37 days	No creep	Creep all summer	High energy ^a	Low energy ^b
No. calves	33	73	36	106	36
Adj. ^c 205 day wt. (lbs.)	448	452	444	-	-
Post-weaning A.D.G. (lbs.)	0.32	0.28	0.38	0.23	0.58
Average days sick/calf post-weaning	0.6	0.8	1.8	0.6	1.5

^a60% dehydrated alfalfa, 40% milo.

^b30% oats, 30% milo, 15% soybean meal, 25% prairie hay.

^cStandard B.I.F. adjustment was used.

34 - 1.25
disodium phosphate
anhydrous.