

# Creep Feeding in Western North Dakota and Subsequent Feed Lot Performance

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Creep-fed calves were 23 pounds heavier than non-creep-fed calves at weaning in trials at the Dickinson Experiment Station.

These trials included 536 cow-calf pairs from the Station's commercial Hereford herd, and were conducted over a six-year period from 1961 through 1966.

Each year in June, the cows and their calves were weighed and allotted at random to one of three separate native grass pastures. Whole oats was provided in a creep feeder to the calves in one of the pastures from the first of July until weaning in mid-October.

Table 1 summarizes actual and adjusted weaning weights of the calves for the trial period. Records used in computing the adjusted weights included sire of calf, age and weight of the cow, birth weight, June weight, weaning weight, sex and age of the calf.

**Table 1. Weaning Weights of Hereford Calves in Creep Feeding Trials.**

	Actual weights		
	All creep fed	All non-creep	Advantage
1961	389.7	350.5	39.2**
1962	390.7	364.4	26.0*
1963	391.6	352.7	38.9**
1964	349.6	360.3	-10.7
1965	376.2	356.3	19.9*
1966	379.7	344.5	35.2**
6-year average			24.75**

  

	Adjusted weights		
	All creep fed	All non-creep	Advantage
1961	471.8	426.8	45.0**
1962	496.2	455.1	41.1**
1963	491.2	452.1	39.1**
1964	463.3	463.4	-0.1
1965	478.1	469.5	8.6
1966	460.2	451.1	9.1
6-year average			23.8**

\* indicates statistical significance at the 5% level.  
\*\* indicates statistical significance at the 1% level.

The creep-fed calves consumed an average of 160 pounds of oats per head per year during the trial period, as summarized in Table 2.

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**Table 2. Average Oat Consumption Per Calf Per Year.**

Year	Pounds of oats/calf
1961	171
1962	179
1963	324*
1964	122
1965	113
1966	214

\* 1963 oat consumption unusually high due to yearlings getting into the creep.

Creep feeding calves did not appreciably affect the weight gains of their mothers. However, these cows consistently gained less than did the cows of calves not creep fed. Average cow weights for the trial are summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3. Average Weight of Cows with Calves Creep Fed and Not Creep Fed for the Trial Period 1961-1966.**

	Non-creep	Creep
Average June cow weight	1044.4	1053.3
Average October cow weight	1090.8	1092.8
Average weight gain	46.4	39.5
Difference	+6.9	

## Discussion

Creep feeding oats to suckling calves in western North Dakota increased calf weights at weaning by approximately 23 pounds. These results compare favorably with work done at other stations, and are in line with the values for creep feeding used by the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association.

Approximately five bushels of oats were required for this extra weight gain.

This practice is one means of increasing net farm income when the calves are sold at weaning. Net return per calf depends on the price of oats and the sale price of the calves.

## Performance of Creep Fed and Non-Creep Fed Calves in the Feed Lot

During the five-years 1962-1966, the feed lot performance of creep-fed and non-creep-fed calves was studied.

Gains for the entire trial beginning with the creep-fed phase and ending with the completion of the feed lot phase show no advantage for creep feeding when the animals are fed to slaughter weight. This shows that the calves compensate or "catch-up" on subsequent adequate rations.

**Table 4. Average Gains for Creep Fed and Non-Creep Fed Calves for the Creep Feeding Period and the Feed Lot Period Combined.**

	Lbs. gain for creep-fed calves	Lbs. gain for non-creep-fed calves
1962	888	889
1963	836	848
1964	828	871
1965	871	886
1966	899	857
Five-year average	864	870