

### CREEP FEEDING EXPERIMENT How much faster will creep feeding grow calves to 60 days postweaning?



- 1. Calves per feed input which was increased from 25 calves to the commercial application of 50 calves per feeder
- 2. The outputs used the calculator from www. advantagefeeders.com.au/calculating-return-on-investment
- The outputs includes the costs associated with filling, monitoring and depreciation.

### **Background:**

The primary objective of creep feeding is to transform infant calves to have the ability to convert pasture, other forages and supplements into nutrients they can utilise. This results in higher growth rates.

An additional benefit that farmers commonly experience is that the young stock that are creep fed and have a more advanced rumen perform better after weaning. This experiment will measure the additional growth and profit of creep fed calves up to the point of weaning and for an additional 60 days after weaning.



**Experiment operator:** Jeremy Cooper, Circle 8 Bulls, Marulan, NSW

### METHOD

Age of calves at commencement:	10 days (average)
Duration:	273 days - 213 pre weaning and 60 days post weaning
Breed:	Wagyu
Calves per group:	25 in each of the creep fed and control groups
Feed type:	Riverina and Ambos pellets
Target feeding quantity:	Avg. of 800g/calf/day until weaning and no feed after
Location:	Marulan, NSW

### OBSERVATIONS

Jeremy Cooper, the experiment operator had the following observations throughout the experiment:

- It took approximately two weeks before calves were regularly feeding from the creep feeder.
- The pelleted feed was purchased from two feed companies. Both flowed well.
- The fires of the 19/20 summer meant that calves were affected by air pollution, some days reaching 2000 parts per million. These fires also meant that calves couldn't be monitored as closely as planned and the ration could have been reduced slightly.
- The creep fed group adjusted better at weaning to eating.

### CONCLUSIONS

#### Benefit post weaning with no feed

After weaning, the calves from the creep fed group were run together with the calves from the control group. Without any further supplement, the creep fed calves continued to grow an average of 100g/ day faster than the calves from the control group for the next 60 days. This is a highly profitable benefit because there is no feed input costs to gain this benefit.

# Normal feed prices will have a significant impact on profit

The pellets used in the trial were \$875/tonne. This price is much higher than the non-drought time average price of approximately \$400/tonne. If the pellets in the trial were purchased for \$400/tonne, this would increase profit for 50 calves, more than double to \$9268.30.

### Expected profit if Wagyu calves weren't used

If other calves were used that had a value of \$3.50/ kg and the average feed price of \$400/tonne was used, the profit still remains significant at \$2814.40 over the feeding period.

### FINDINGS

Cost of feed per tonne delivered	\$875.00
Avg. daily intake pre weaning - 213 days (g/calf/day)	939
Total avg. intake per calf (kg)	200
Avg. cost of feed per calf	\$175.01
Avg. daily weight gain over control group - pre weaning (g/day)	174
Avg. daily weight gain over control group - post weaning (g/day)	100
Total additional weight (kg)	43
Feed conversion* (creep feeding period)	5.41
Feed conversion <sup>*</sup> (creep feeding and post weaning period)	4.65
Avg. gain in value over control group per calf (@\$6.50/KgLW)	\$279.50
Net profit per calf**	\$104.49

\* Feed conversion: Kilograms fed to achieve 1kg of liveweight gain.

\*\* Note: This does not include filling, monitoring or depreciation costs.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

### Creep feeding has a high return on investment

The experiment shows that the creep fed group grew considerably faster than the control group and were more profitable in both the pre and post weaning periods. Using the values observed during the experiment and calculating the possible profit from feeding a commercial quantity of 50 calves, a return of \$4518.13 is possible for a feeding period of only 213 days. This return would see an Advantage Feeders 3800HD with Creep Gates paid off in as little as 6.4 months.

# Holding weaners after weaning receives the benefits of creep feeding before weaning

This experiment has shown that weaners that have been creep fed continue to grow an average of 100g/day faster than weaners that have not been creep fed for 60 days after weaning. If there is a decision to sell or keep weaners that have been creep fed, the future benefit of faster growing weaners should be a factor in this decision.

