

# Creep Feed

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**T**he use of creep feed for lambs is already an established practice and the economy of doing this has often been proved. One of the best reasons for the success of supplying lambs with creep feed is the good feed conversion ratio of younger animals to older animals. Whether this practice could be sensible and economical with beef cattle was still an untested matter.

George Els, who farms beef cattle near Zeerust, in collaboration with De Heus, decided to test if it was worthwhile feeding creep feed to calves. He aimed to improve his herd and the quality of his weaned calves and to relieve the pressure on his cows. George started a farm-based experiment on the Simbra crossbreds on hard “klipveld” on 15 December 2014.

The calves used in the test were born from 15 October 2014 and were approximately two months (70 kg) old when the experiment started. As a control half of the calves were not given any creep feed because they wanted to compare the progress of the two groups in the same circumstances. It is also obvious from the growth figures and the photographs printed below that the experiment was done during a very poor, dry year.



De Heus RumiLick® Accelerator (V 24940) was used as creep feed and was supplied ad lib. in self-feeders in the feeding pens (size of pens available from the author) weekly. The initial intake of creep feed pellets was in the region of 200 – 300 g/day and the average intake over the whole period (126 days on average) that the creep feed was supplied was 870 g/animal/day with an ADG of 1,19 kg/day. Over

# for Calves?



the same period, the ADG of the control group was 350 g/day. The difference that can be attributed to the supply of creep feed, is a growth of 840 g/day against a feed intake of 870 g/day. This is a feed conversion ratio of 1,035:1. To put these figures into the correct perspective: a good feed conversion ratio for calves in a feedlot is in the region of 4,5:1 to 5,5:1.

At that stage the cost of RumiLick® Accelerator was R3,60/kg and the calf price on the hoof was R19,16/kg. In Table 1 the economy of creep feeding versus no creep feeding is shown.

**TABLE 1:** Economy of Creep Feed of 2-Month-Old Calves versus a Control Group.

The main aim of the experiment was to deliver a better quality calf in order to wean calves sooner and this was achieved with RumiLick® Accelerator

as creep feed. The effect of this on the cows is probably more impressive. Although this was not really a measurable outcome the visual difference between cows and calves with and without creep feed was very obvious.

**TABLE 1**

Parameters	Control Group	Creep Fed Group
<b>ADG (period of 126 days)</b>	350 g/day	1190 g/day
<b>Increase over 126 Days</b>	44,1 kg	149,94 kg
<b>Weaning Weight on 20 April 2015 (6 months)</b>	114,1 kg (not weaned – too light)	219,94 kg
<b>Additional growth with creep feed (Accelerator)</b>	-	105,84 kg
<b>Value of Additional growth with creep feed</b>	R 0	105,84 kg x R 19,16 = R 2 029,89
<b>Creep feed costs/calf</b>	R 0	R 394,63
<b>Margin above feed costs/calf</b>	R 0	R 1 633,26
<b>Return on Investment of R1 (ROI)</b>	R 0	R 4,14 : R1

## Cows and Calves without Creep Feed



In most cases, the effect of one year's feeding can only really be seen in terms of the conception rate of cows and weaning weights of the calves in the following year. From these photos, each producer can make his own estimation of how much supplementary feed will be required (during the coming winter) by the two different groups in order to reach a minimum condition score of 3 by the next mating season. In addition, the calves of the cows in the creep feed group are already weaned and removed from the farm while the cows

## Cows and Calves with Creep Feed



of the control group have to support their calves for another few months more, which will impact their body condition score even more.

From this experiment, it is clear that creep feed for cattle (calves) is a very profitable and promising practice.

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