



## Key Targets

**1** To create a smooth transition at weaning with **minimal performance check**

**2** To improve post-weaning growth by



**3** To improve post-weaning **FCR by 0.1**



**4** To improve net return by **£1-2 per pig sold**



# Creep Feeding

Creep feeding is the practice of feeding a solid diet to piglets while 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 three weeks and then slowly declines.

Proper creep feeding is a **very valuable and worthwhile process**, but it must be done correctly to see the benefits and avoid wastage

Creep feed **gets the piglet used to eating solid feed** and makes the piglet familiar with what becomes the sole diet at weaning; studies have also shown that, as creep feed intakes rise, post-weaning diarrhoea is reduced

Supplementing sow milk with creep feed can result in both **improved pre- and post-weaning performance**, leading to an overall improvement in net return of up to £2 per pig

### THE BASICS: HOW TO CREEP FEED

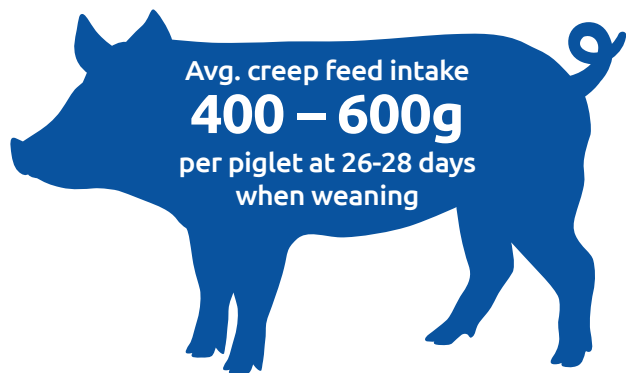
- Start creep feeding at **7-10** days of age, or according to the manufacturer's recommendations
- Begin by offering creep on a flat surface, for example, a shallow tray (heavy metal or plastic trays that can hook into the slats)
- Place trays close to the piglets but not under direct heat as this will turn the feed stale too quickly; also, keep feed away from the dunging area
- Offer creep when the sows are feeding as piglets are active and unlikely to be suckled for some time.

### THE BASICS: QUANTITY

- 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
- Begin with very small amounts replaced at least twice a day, preferably more. Always remove all uneaten creep; only unmedicated waste creep can be fed to the sow.

**Remember** the importance of the sow: it is crucial to maximise milk yield, she will be providing the majority of the piglet's nutrition; see *Action for Productivity 20: Condition scoring*

Utilisation of creep feed should always be considered as a supplement for increased benefit **rather than a replacement for milk**



Piglets weaned at 21 days will eat substantially less than those weaned later

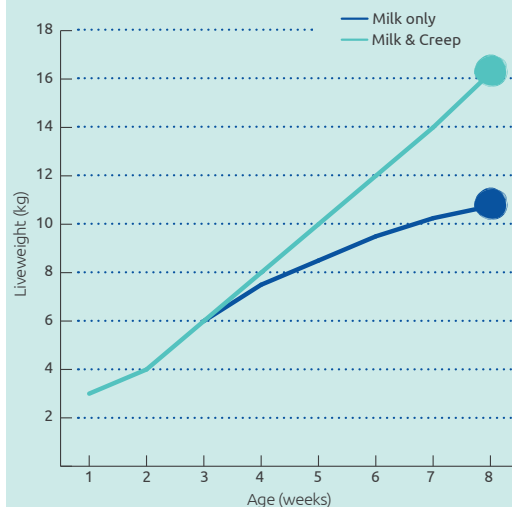
#### THE BASICS: CARE & STORAGE

- Ensure fresh water is available for the piglet at all times in the farrowing house while creep feeding
- Keep creep feed fresh and clean and out of reach of the sow
- Clean any fouled trays or troughs
- Store creep feed in a cool place and always close bags to prevent feed taking up the farrowing house odours and/or becoming rancid.

#### ENCOURAGING CREEP INTAKE

- To make the transition as smooth as possible use the same creep pre-weaning and immediately post-weaning
- Offer good quality, palatable and highly digestible feed which piglets will find appealing
- Ensure there is an accessible supply of fresh water as this will influence feed intake
- Sticky meal that sticks to the piglets' snouts and requires them to lick it may encourage intake
- Pellets and blends of pellets with mash (meal and water) are also very effective, and, generally, result in less wastage than meal
- Position creep feed away from corners, drinkers and heat lamps to minimise the likelihood of fouling
- If using mats, they should be removed after a few days; creep should then be provided in feeders, which will need careful adjustment
- In each litter, some piglets will be eating nothing at all, even when the other piglets are eating well; watch out for these pigs and manage them carefully to prevent them fading.

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



Example of good siting of creep feed

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 around **£1.20/pig**. Lifetime benefit in growing pig performance can be expected, resulting in a net margin benefit of around **£1-2/pig** sold or pigs being sold **3-4** days earlier.

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