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Post-weaning Performance of Calves as Affected by
Longstem Hay and Pre-weaning Creep Feeding

Gary Greathouse and E. F. Smith

Mortality in calves at weaning is one of the major problems in the beef industry. Some relief from this problem might be achieved if the calves could be changed from milk and grass to a high energy ration with little lapse in time. Many ranchers do not have adequate equipment, labor or time to do this job on the ranch where it could best be done. If a post-weaning management system could be formulated that would be acceptable to the producer of the calves and reduce death and sickness it would be of tremendous benefit. Many local feed companies are in a position to deliver complete rations to a self-feeder in the owner's lot. The management system proposed here would enable the rancher to use this service.

The objectives of this test were to: 1. Determine if there was any advantage to introducing the ration to the calves prior to weaning; 2. Determine if it is necessary to feed hay to calves with a ration of 40% ground sorghum grain and 60% dehydrated alfalfa crumbles.

Cows and their 1969 calves were sorted into two pastures. Calves in one pasture had access to 60% dehydrated alfalfa crumbles and 40% ground sorghum grain for two months before weaning. The 28 calves on the creep feed consumed 400 lbs. during the two months. All other treatments were alike for both groups.

When weaned, the calves were moved to drylot and divided into four groups. Half of those on the creep feed continued on it. The other half received the creep feed plus alfalfa hay and prairie hay free choice. Similarly, half of those not creep fed received the creep alone; the other half received it plus longstem hay free choice.

Results

Results are reported in table 10.

There appeared to be no beneficial effect on performance after weaning when the calves were creep fed in the pasture, however, the amount of creep consumed in the pasture was relatively low. There were essentially no differences in feed consumption, average daily gain, or feed required per pound of gain during the 35 days after weaning.

Longstem hay with sorghum grain and alfalfa crumbles increased total feed intake without increasing average daily gain, which decreased feed efficiency. No harmful effects nor digestive disturbances were observed when longstem hay was omitted from the ration.

None of the calves under any treatment became sick or needed medical treatment.

Table 10. Post-weaning Performance of Calves as Affected by
Longstem Hay and Pre-weaning Creep Feeding

August 26 to September 30, 1969 - 35 days

	<u>CREEP IN PASTURE</u>		<u>NO CREEP IN PASTURE</u>	
	<u>Mixture & hay</u>	<u>Mixture</u>	<u>Mixture & hay</u>	<u>Mixture</u>
Number of head	14	14	23	24
Avg. feed per day, lbs.				
Mixture; self-fed:				
Grain	3.5	4.3	3.8	4.1
Alfalfa crumbles	5.2	6.4	5.7	6.1
Alfalfa hay	1.8	---	1.8	---
Prairie hay	2.1	---	1.8	---
Total, lbs.	12.6	10.7	13.1	10.2
Avg. weight at wean- ing, lbs.	334	328	365	349
Avg. weight 35 days after weaning, lbs.	396	393	429	415
Avg. daily gain, lbs.	1.8	1.9	1.8	1.9
Avg. feed consumed per 7.1 pound of gain, lbs.		5.7	7.2	5.4