

Creep feeding trial

A recently concluded trial shows that while creep feeding is quite profitable, feeding a restricted ration is considerably more profitable than feeding free-choice oats.



Economical feeding maximises creep feeding profits

Results:

The free choice oats group had the highest growth rates however, this group sold for a discounted price due to them being considered “pot-bellied” with excessive amounts of flesh. The restricted barley group sold at the highest price due to being in forward condition.

The growth rate of the group was 0.42lb/day less than the free choice oats group but sold for \$68.02 more than the oats group and \$106.56 more than the group that wasn’t supplemented.

Trial outline:

Duration: 60 days (from 120 to 180 days old)

Quantity: 20 in each supplement group, 10 in the control group

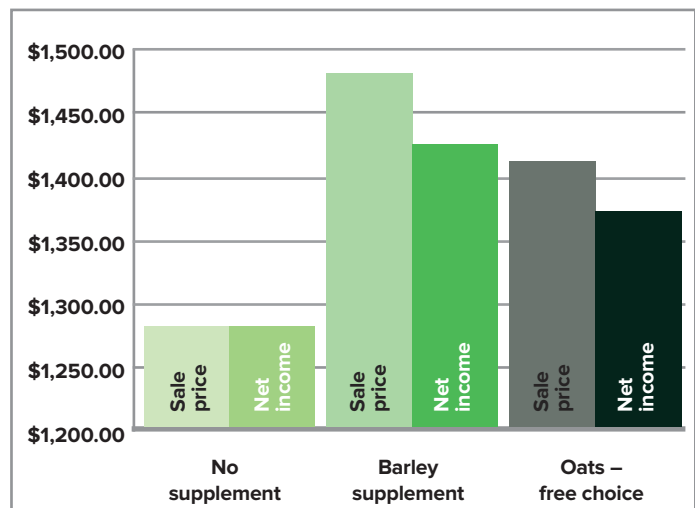
Sex: Half steers and half heifers in each group

Feed: *No supplement group:* Pasture

Restricted barley group: Pasture plus 3.1lbs/day of barley

Unrestricted oats group: Pasture plus 4.5lbs/day of oats

Average weaner sale price



* See following page for Sale Price and Feeding Expense table



Creep feeding trial

How can barley be fed safely to calves?

The 3IN1FEEDERS system requires stock to lick feed out of a groove between two adjusters.

Research has shown that when the lick system is in its most restricted setting, stock can only lick for 5-10 minutes between periods of grazing.

The licking period is limited because livestock use the saliva on their tongue to get the feed out of the groove. The saliva decreases with each lick until the animal can no longer access the feed.

Changing the position of these adjusters changes the ration that stock can consume. Calves can be limited to approximately 1lb/day.

SALE PRICE	No supp.	Barley - restricted	Oats - free choice
Avg. daily weight gain (lbs/head)	2.11	2.53	2.95
Total weight gain (lbs/head)	126.6	151.9	177
Sale weight (lbs/head)	450.4	486.1	517.5
Sale price/lbs	\$2.85	\$2.95	\$2.65
Sale price/head	\$1,283.64	\$1,434.00	\$1,371.38
Feeding expense/head*	\$0.00	\$43.80	\$49.20
Net Income/head	\$1,283.64	\$1,390.20	\$1,322.18

FEEDING EXPENSE	No Supp.	Barley - restricted	Oats - free choice
Feed price (tonne)	0	200	180
Daily consumption (lbs/head)	0	3.1	4.5
Daily feed cost/head	\$0.00	\$0.37	\$0.28
Total feed cost/head (60 days)	\$0.00	\$16.80	\$22.20
Labour/head - filling feeder	\$0.00	\$3.00	\$3.00
Depreciation/head (15% on a \$3200 investment)	\$0.00	\$24.00	\$24.00
Total feeding expense/head	\$0.00	\$43.80	\$49.20

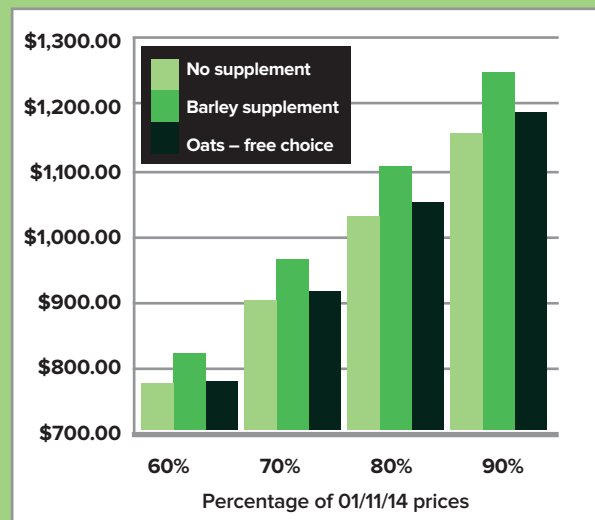
Is Creep Feeding still profitable when prices are lower?

2014 prices have been higher than the historical average. They are forecast to remain high for a number of years yet.

Even so, if we were to imagine creep feeding a restricted barley ration with beef at only 60% of current prices and the same input costs as experienced in this trial, it would be \$46.41/head more profitable than not creep feeding.

Perhaps more remarkably, it would be \$42.97/head more profitable than creep feeding a free-choice oats ration.

Net income with lower weaner prices



Opportunity for higher profits

The feeders in the trial only had 20 calves feeding from there each. Many farmers feed 50 calves with one feeder.

Feeding 50 calves with a feeder would spread the depreciation cost over more calves to reduce it from \$24/head to less than \$10/head.

The trial operated for 60 days. In many operations, creep feeding can operate for over 120 days.

A period of creep feeding would increase growth rates for longer period, increasing profits more than experienced in this trial.