

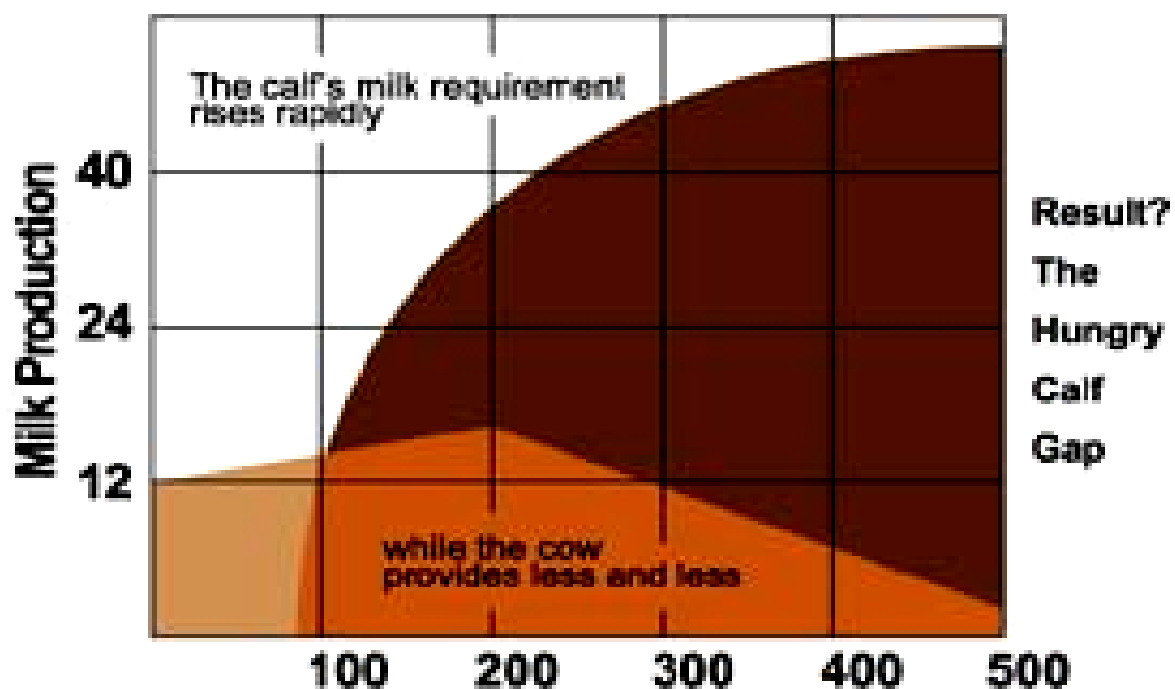
# CREEP FEEDING

Most calves are not likely to reach their maximum potential growth without your help and intervention through a practice known as “creep feeding.” Creep feeding involves providing supplemental feed to nursing calves to address a bovine predicament Purina calls “The Hungry Calf Gap.”

This gap occurs when the calf is about three-to-five months old and several things happen:

- The mother’s milk production declines
- Forage quality and digestibility decline
- The calf must compete with the cow for less grass that is also declining in quality.

## The Hungry Calf Gap



Purina Mills research indicates that creep feeding can add between 56 to 86 pounds to calves' weaning weight; also, creep-fed calves eat significantly more in the first week on starter feed than non-creep-fed calves and are healthier overall.

Genetics ultimately determine a calf's maximum growth potential, but creep feeding is a significant boost.

Supply Development Director for Certified Angus Beef (CAB) Mark McCully deals with genetics and achieving maximum potential every day, and wouldn't be without "a proper creep feeding program."

"Research supports that creep feeding and/or early weaning are critical for maximizing value-added genetics to hit a high quality target," he says. "Getting energy into calves early increases their likelihood of being accepted later for the CAB brand."

Good nutrition is important throughout the lifespan, but producers who want to achieve marbling, a trait of a high quality carcass, should remember that "During a period around day 100 to 300—before during and after weaning—you want to supply a diet higher in energy than typically used," he says.

The timing of when to start creep feeding can vary. "It can depend on the area," McCully notes. "If there are drought conditions and limited forage, you'll want to start creep feeding a little earlier. Also, it can depend on the age of the mother. If she's still growing, early weaning and/or creep feeding allow her to use more nutrients for her own growth."

Since creep feeding is an essential part of what goes into producing a calf for the CAB brand, why wouldn't everyone use creep feeding?

"Producers see three drawbacks to creep feeding. First is the cost of investing in a feeding and delivery system. Second, the calves can turn out too fleshy, that is, with too much conditioning, and

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may be discounted by buyers. And third, creep feeding that is done too rapidly with heifers can hurt milk production in the longer term," explains McCully. Purina Mills' Accu-Creep™ feed, using the IM Intake Modifying Technology® feeding program (discussed below) helps overcome these concerns.

McCully advises producers to remember creep feeding is not about achieving maximum weight gain. It's about strategic conditioning, with only about 1 ½ to 2 pounds of weight gain per day.

Purina Mills' Accu-Creep™ feed program is the gold standard for creep feeding. Initially, start calves on a 4-Square® Stocker/Grower feed product. This highly palatable, pelleted product will help get calves eating and accustomed to the self feeder. When calves' intake is two to three pounds per head per day, you can transition to Accu-Creep™ feed with Purina Mills' IM Intake Modifying Technology® feeding program. Accu-Creep™ feed will effectively control intake of these calves to 1 percent of their body weight or less. This helps improve feed efficiency (reducing feed cost) and keeps calves from becoming too fleshy or depositing too much fat in the immature heifer's udder. These were the primary concerns addressed above.

Contact a Purina Mills dealer to help you work through your concerns and develop a proper creep feeding program that meets your needs.



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