

The multiplication factors of a good creep diet

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The problem

Improvements to genetics, management and nutrition continue to increase the number of weaned piglets per litter; as a result milk production of the sow becomes limiting, causing the lower weaning weight of piglets. The reduction of weaning weights can predispose more piglets to a post weaning dip, and these together can result in lower slaughter weights. This has placed an increasing importance on the use of a high-performance creep feed.

The positive multiplication factors of feeding a good creep feed

Creep (prestarter) intake during the suckling period is providing a multiplication of nutrients available for the piglets. More nutrients are available during the suckling phase, which will compensate for the limitation in milk production. Graph 1 shows the radical increase in creep feed intake from the period of 16-20 days of age when milk production begins to become limiting and creep feed is used as a supplement.

Creep feed intake during the suckling period results in a multiplication of weight gain during the weaner period. Creep feed intake during the suckling period is the best predictor of performance during the post-wean period (Graph 2; Cargill research, 2014). 100 grams more creep feed intake during the suckling period can produce a 50 gram per day higher gain during post-wean, the period until 10 weeks of age (resulting in more than 2 kg extra weight).

Creep feed intake during the suckling period trains the piglet to produce more amylase and protease post-weaning. Higher amylase and protease secretion results in easier digestion of starch and vegetable protein post-weaning, resulting in a reduced risk for diarrhea and subsequently lower medication require-

ment. Feeding a well formulated creep diet post-weaning helps to decrease the post-weaning dip. The support for an easier transition helps to reduce the risk for diarrhea.

Feeding a creep diet post-weaning supports an increased feed intake and weight gain, finally increasing slaughter weights. The higher slaughter value per pig generally supports the increased investment during the suckling and post-wean periods.

In summary, reasons to invest in a good creep diet

A creep diet during the suckling period can partly compensate for the limiting milk production of the sow. The higher the creep feed intake

during the suckling period, the reduced risk of post-weaning performance dip.

Creed feed helps assists with training piglets to better digest starch and vegetable protein post-weaning.

The higher the creep feed intake during the suckling period, the higher the performance during the post-wean and grow-out periods. Return on investment is excellent during the creep period, a time when the piglets are extremely efficient with an FCR of about 1.

*This article was adapted from research done by Cargill's animal nutrition business, a technical support structure of Meadow Feeds. Other references available upon request.

