

## Should I Be Creep Feeding in Today's Environment?

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### What's Old is New Again:

Have you ever heard the phrase, "what's old is new again"? Well, this is what we're observing in the swine industry today. Over the past 20 years, the pendulum in swine production practices has swung from many extremes. Weaning age is one of these practices. Twenty years ago, most producers weaned pigs at 21 to 28 days of age. Then, in the 1990's, the concept of segregated early weaning became common practice and the industry moved weaning age down to 14 to 18 days of age this reduced exposure of piglets to disease. However, when the weaning age was decreased, post-weaning performance declined due to pigs' underdeveloped immune system. Today the pendulum is shifting back to 21 to 28 days of age for most weaned pigs. At the same time, the average litter size has increased from 10.2 (in the late 1990's) to 11.5 (in 2009), with an increasing number of piglets weighing less than 2.2 lb at birth (about 19%). Additionally, most genetic companies have assured us that their genetic selection techniques will be moving the number of live born pigs per litter to over 13 within the next 5 years.

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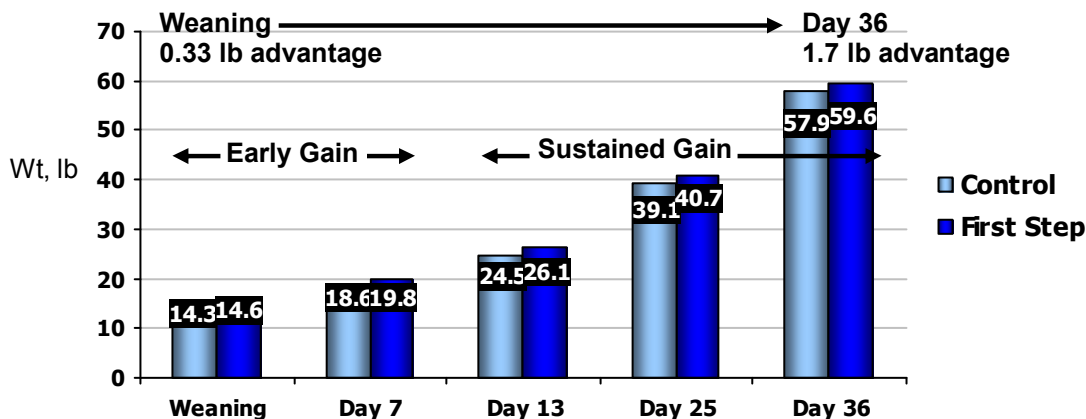
Now that weaning age is rising, it is time again (as in the past) to use creep feeding to assist these older pigs and larger litters. Providing a creep feed prior to weaning: creates 'eaters', starts transitioning the gut from milk to dry feed, allows a gradual exposure to soybean meal and increases the secretion of proteolytic enzymes needed to digest plant proteins reducing 'post-wean lag'.

Sulabo and coworkers (2009) showed that feeding piglets a complex creep diet 3 days prior to weaning resulted in 68% of the pigs becoming eaters pre-weaning versus only 28% of the pigs when fed a simple creep diet (sow's diet). Pigs that became eaters during pre-weaning, gained 6.2% better ( $P < 0.01$ ) and had greater average daily feed intake ( $P < 0.002$ ) post-weaning than non-eaters. Also, eaters had improved post-weaning feed intake, average daily gain, body weight uniformity and reduced 'post-wean lag'. Therefore, a more complex, tailored creep feed that mimic sow's colostrum/milk is needed for young pigs.

### Land O'Lakes Purina Feed Launches First Step™ Creep Feed:

Land O'Lakes Purina Feed has developed a unique creep feed, First Step™, formulated with MpD®-class palatants. First Step™ encourages intake, minimizes feed wastage and is preferred by pigs (> 2:1 vs. previous palatant). Below are results from research conducted at LongView Animal Nutrition Center (2010):

Effect of FIRST STEP™ Creep Feed on Subsequent Nursery Performance:



Studies by Tokach (1992) and others have shown the relationship between live-weight gain during the first week after weaning and its' impact on the number of days to market. The greater a pig's average daily weight gain during the first week after weaning, the shorter time it takes to get to market.

### **How Should I Use a Creep Feed?**

Begin feeding 3-5 days before weaning (using a total of 1.5 - 2.5 lb of First Step™ per litter during that time) to create 'eaters' and improve post-weaning performance. For example, if a farm weans 100 litters per week and plans on creeping for 5 days prior to weaning, that farm would need 150-250 lbs per week of First Step™ creep feed. Feeding on mats or in pans twice daily is preferred versus feeding once daily, to reduce wastage and provide more access to piglets. Finding a small scoop, or a can, to measure accurately 1.5 lb of feed will help the farm staff and ensure accuracy in creep feeding.

### **Conclusion:**

Past pig performance is a good indication of future growth results. Use First Step™ creep feed to create 'eaters', transition the gut and promote early and sustained gains. **FIRST STEP™ is THE first stage to nutritionally creating Full Value Pigs™!**

### References:

- R. C. Sulabo, M.D. Tokach, J.R. Bergstrom, J. M. DeRouchey, R. D. Goodband, S. S. Dritz, and J. L. Nelssen. 2009. Effects of Creep Diet Complexity on Individual Consumption Characteristics and Growth Performance of Neonatal and Weanling Pigs. Kansas State University. Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, Swine Day 2009 Report.
- Tokach, M. D., Goodband, R. D., Nelssen, J. L., and Kats, L. J. 1992. Influence of weaning weight and growth during the first week postweaning on subsequent pig performance. Kansas State University. Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, Swine Day 2009 Report.

*For further information, please see your local feed sales representative at a Land O'Lakes Feed Co-op or Purina Mills Dealer. Visit us on-line at [www.UltraCareFeed.com](http://www.UltraCareFeed.com) or [www.PurinaPigStarters.com](http://www.PurinaPigStarters.com)*

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