

# Creep or weaner feed for suckling pigs?

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It has been shown that after weaning, piglets perform better if they consume sufficient solid feed before weaning.

Furthermore, Dr E. Bruininx (2002) demonstrated that piglets that consumed supplementary feed before weaning reached a 7% higher feed intake and a 17% higher growth in the first five weeks after weaning than piglets that were not given additional feed.

Most pig farmers now provide suckling piglets with supplementary feed. However, opinions differ as to which supplementary feed is technically and economically the most attractive. In practice, considerable variation exists in the intake of supplementary feed between litters.

Moreover, not all the piglets in a litter will consume supplementary feed, even when offered.

A number of pig farmers give their animals weaner feed before weaning for the sake of convenience or because of the price.

It is also suggested that it would be beneficial if piglets get the same type of feed before and after weaning.

## Trial set-up

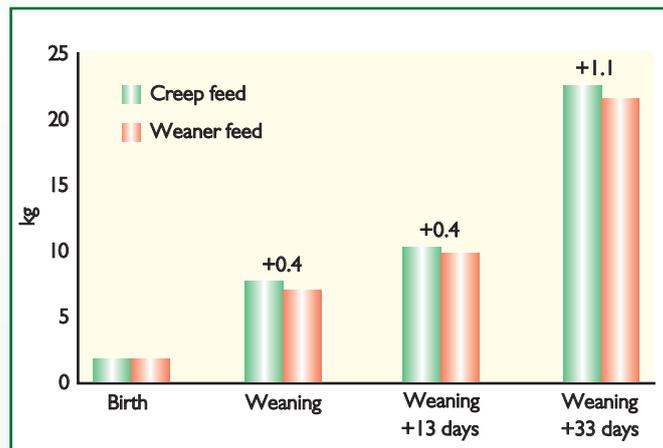
Denkvit conducted a trial on its 'De Grutto' experimental farm. From the age of five days until weaning, two groups of 16 litters were each given a creep feed (2mm) or a weaner feed (3.6mm).

A number of differences between the creep feed and weaner feed are shown in Table 1.

After weaning, at approximately 26 days, the piglets in both groups

**Table 1. Differences between creep feed and weaner feed.**

	Creep feed	Weaner feed	Starter feed
Metabol. energy (MJ)	17.4	13.8	13.6
Protein (%)	21.8	18.3	18.3
Fat (%)	14.8	6.3	5.2
Lysine (%)	1.47	1.15	1.10
Lactose (%)	+++++	++	+
Starch (%)	+	++++	+++++
pH	6.2	5.0	4.8
Taste improvers	++++	++	+
Diameter (mm)	2.0	3.6	3.6



**Fig. 1. The effect of creep feed or weaner feed before weaning on the weight up to 33 days after weaning.**

were given the same weaner feed for 13 days. The first group of piglets had to change feed from creep feed to weaner feed at weaning. The second group were given the weaner feed both before and after weaning.

From 13 to 33 days after weaning, both groups of piglets were offered the same starter feed.

Differences in technical results before and after weaning were, therefore, only due to a different feed before weaning.

## Technical results

This trial with approximately 160 piglets per group (see Table 2) clearly showed that the suckling piglets preferred the creep feed over the weaner feed.

This resulted in a higher weaning weight (+0.4kg) and more impor-

tantly, a better feed intake and growth after weaning. The piglets which were fed the creep feed before weaning consumed 9.4% more feed in the first 13 days after weaning than the piglets which were fed a weaner feed before weaning.

The slightly higher feed conversion ratio in this period illustrates that the 'creep feed' piglets had to get

used to the weaner feed, but the difference in weight of 0.4kg was maintained. The trial shows, therefore, that the suggested negative effect of changing feed at weaning is amply compensated by the positive effect of a higher feed consumption before weaning.

The piglets fed with the creep feed before weaning also continued to eat (6.5%) and grow better (6.3%) in the period from 13 to 33 days after weaning. At the end of the trial period (59 days of age), the piglets that were fed with creep feed were 1.1kg heavier.

The growth from birth until the end of the trial improved by 6.6%.

## Conclusion

Feeding piglets high quality creep feed throughout the suckling period generates better technical results than feeding them a weaner feed before weaning.

Both before and after weaning piglets have a higher feed intake and a better growth, resulting in 1.1kg heavier piglets at 59 days of age. ■

**Table 2. Trial results.**

	Creep feed	Weaner feed
Weaning age (days)	26.0	26.4
Number of piglets	159	169
<b>Feed intake</b>		
Before weaning (g)	413	261
0-13 days after weaning (kg)	3.94	3.60
13-33 days after weaning (kg)	17.91	16.83
<b>Weight (kg)</b>		
Birth	1.52	1.54
Weaning (26 days)	8.3	7.9
Weaning + 13 days	11.2	10.8
Weaning + 33 days	22.8	21.7
<b>Growth rate (g/day)</b>		
Birth to weaning	260 (+7.4%)	242
0-13 days after weaning	227 (+1.8%)	221
13-33 days after weaning	576 (+6.3%)	542
0-33 days after weaning	438 (+5.3%)	416
Birth to 33 days after weaning	357 (+6.6%)	335
<b>Feed conversion ratio</b>		
0-13 days after weaning	1.34	1.25
13-33 days after weaning	1.55	1.55
0-33 days after weaning	1.51	1.49