



# NUTRITION NOTES

Innovation + Research from Kent Nutrition Group

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## PIG CREEP FEEDING 101

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The purpose of creep feeding is NOT to gain extra weaning weight (this sometimes happens in studies but not always). It is to help prepare the piglet for the Nursery 1 diet and the transition from liquid milk to solid pellets. Pigs that are creep fed will likely have a higher ADG and ADFI in the nursery.

### Why/how does feeding creep prepare pigs for the next stage?

- Solid food/pellet. (Sow feed is typically mash. You can creep feed with sow feed, but using a nursery pellet is better.) Creep feed is a novel feed shape, size, and texture. This helps them get used to chewing their food.
- Prepare the gut. Milk is high in lactose and sugars (easy to digest/breakdown for the pig), Nursery 1 diet has more grains than milk, doesn't taste as sweet, and takes longer to digest. (See graph below on enzyme development in the gut.)

### How much and when to creep feed?

Start with a little. A few handfuls (i.e., a spray paint can cap worth at the beginning). You want them to start getting interested in the feed and not just kicking it into the pit. As they start eating all of it, you can add more. You want them to be eating all of the feed each day (if there's any leftover you are feeding too much). By weaning, you really don't need more than a "scoop" for each crate—those elevator cups or feed pans do NOT need to be completely full.

Remember, we aren't trying to put an extra pound on those pigs—just get them used to the feed and start activating their guts.

### When to Start

You can start as early as 7-10 days of age and no later than 5 days prior to weaning. Getting a couple weeks' worth of creep feeding is perfect! Yes, this process is added labor on the farm, so do what works best for farm employees and is the most sustainable and consistent, and likely to actually get done on the farm!

### Key Tips/Tricks

- Matching the creep feed to the N1 diet is best if possible! When they get to the nursery, they will start on feed much faster because it is familiar to them! They already know what it smells and tastes like.
- Installing elevator bucket cups in the farrowing crates is best. Easier to disinfect from a labor standpoint than pans. Just power wash the bucket cups with the crates instead of removing them and cleaning. This is also more biosecure! Feeding in cups or pans helps prevent wastage as well. By feeding on the mat, a lot of feed will end up in the pit and N1 diets are costly.
- Creep feeding vs. Mat feeding vs. Gruel feeding. Sometimes these terms get confusing. Here's how I've always defined them which may be different than some producers—so make sure you are on the same page as them with terms.

**Creep feeding:** any type of feeding done prior to weaning. Can be feed put on the mats in the crate or in pans. Typically, creep feeding is solid feed, but you could create a gruel with some milk replacer (but that would be more of a case for fall behind liters and probably just called gruel feeding).

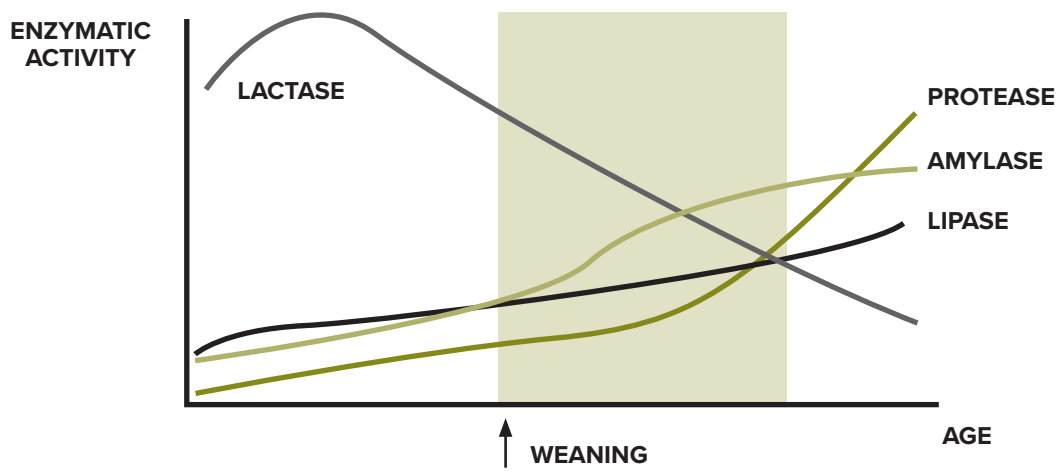
**Gruel Feeding:** the combining of feed, water, and something like milk replacer powder (or baby pig restart from tech mix) in a pan. Typically done for sick pens or small pig pens in nurseries.

**Mat feeding:** placing solid feed on a mat in a pen. Recommended to use solid feed. Great for wean to finish barns — place a mat in center of pen/near heaters and feeders. Sprinkle feed from feeder (Optional add baby pig restart or similar product—that you also sprinkle on top of feed in the feeder) for the first few days post-placement. Having these strong (and yummy) smelling products is key to attracting the pigs to the feed. Use mats (and gruel feeding pans) for longer with fall behind pens!

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## PRODUCTION OF DIGESTIVE ENZYMES IS NOT READY



Low Protease and amylase: Proteins, specially plant-origin proteins, and some complex carbohydrates are not properly digested

Undigested feed in intestine is a substrate for pathogenic bacteria

For More Information, visit [plusvet.eu/2015/02/02/post-weaning-gap-health-and-economic-consequences/](https://plusvet.eu/2015/02/02/post-weaning-gap-health-and-economic-consequences/)