

SWIFT START® CALF FEEDING TRIAL UPDATE:

How Heifers On The Crystal Creek® Swift Start® Calf & Heifer Program Perform When Entering The Milking Herd



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The goal of any dairy calf raiser is to have a healthy, productive, replacement heifer that is a profitable addition to their milking line. The Crystal Creek® Swift Start® Calf & Heifer program consists of a line of milk replacers, texturized

calf feeds, calf pellets and mineral formulated with industry leading technology and manufactured with the highest quality ingredients available. University research has proven time and time again that the way calves are fed and raised during the pre-wean period will affect their performance later in life. In the “Swift Start® Calf Feeding Challenge” newsletter article published in April of 2017, Crystal Creek® provided documentation of superior performance results in pre-weaned calves that were on the Swift Start® Calf & Heifer program. This data showed higher body weight gains, improved feed conversion rates, improved nutrient digestibility, less veterinary intervention and smoother transitions into weaning. The calves on the Swift Start® calf feeding program not only outperformed the calves on the competitor’s program but also saved the calf raiser money. This article will take topics highlighted in the initial trial a step further and evaluate the performance of heifer calves as they transition into post-weaned heifers and ultimately, progress into the lactating herd.

Calf Performance

An on-farm calf trial was conducted during the winter of 2017-2018; comparing the Crystal Creek® Swift Start® Calf & Heifer program to a competitor’s feed program.



The trial was performed on a 400-cow conventional dairy, located in eastern Wisconsin. The calf raiser and their employees collected all the information, compiled it into a spreadsheet and then submitted the data to Crystal Creek®. Both groups of calves were weighed at birth and weaning. Milk replacer powder was weighed with a scale prior to mixing. Calf feed fed was weighed and refusals of the calf feed were also weighed to verify amounts of calf feed consumed. Treatments, and their associated costs, were recorded.

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Swift Start® Calf Feeding Trial Update

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Tables 1, 2 and 3 show the trial results of the calves on the Swift Start® calf feeding program compared to calves on the competitor's feed program. The calves on the Swift Start® calf feeding program had notably higher average daily gains, less treatments per calf and significantly less death loss.

	Average Birth Weight	Average Wean Weight	Average Days On Milk	Average Daily Gain	Average Cost To Raise
Swift Start® Program	100.56 lb.	185.6 lb.	56.1	1.52 lb.	\$188.66
Competitor Program	100.51 lb.	151.9 lb.	54.5	0.935 lb.	\$204.02
Swift Start® Advantage	Similar	+33.7 lb.	Similar	+0.59 lb.	\$15.36 less/calf

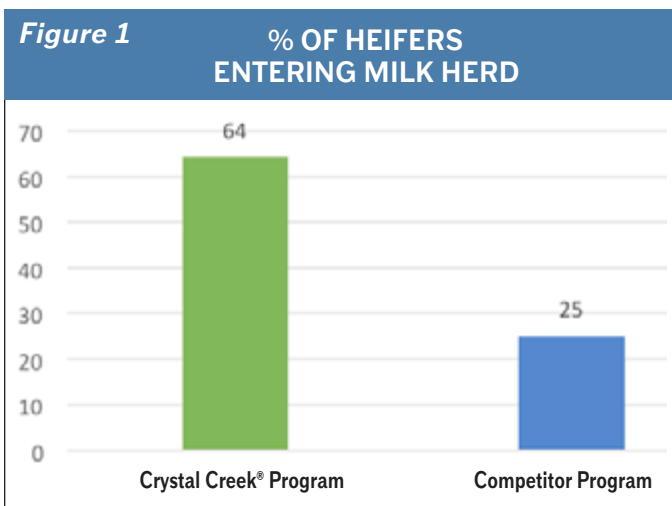
Birth weights were almost identical on each program but the Swift Start® calf group had a 0.59 lb. increase in average daily gain, which resulted in higher weaning weights and a decreased cost to raise.

	Total Treatments	Total Calves	Total Treatments Per Calf
Swift Start® Program	23	24	0.96
Competitor Program	96	22	4.36

Calves on the Swift Start® calf feeding program had, on average, 3.4 less treatments per calf. Research has shown that calves receiving less treatments will have higher milk production once they enter the lactating herd.

	Total Calves Started	Total Calves Weaned	% Death Loss
Swift Start® Program	24	24	0%
Competitor Program	24	11	54%

All the calves on the Swift Start® calf feeding program reached the weaning point while over half of the calves on the competitor's feed program did not survive.



Data collected shows heifers raised on the Swift Start® calf feeding program had a 2.5x's greater chance of entering the milking herd.

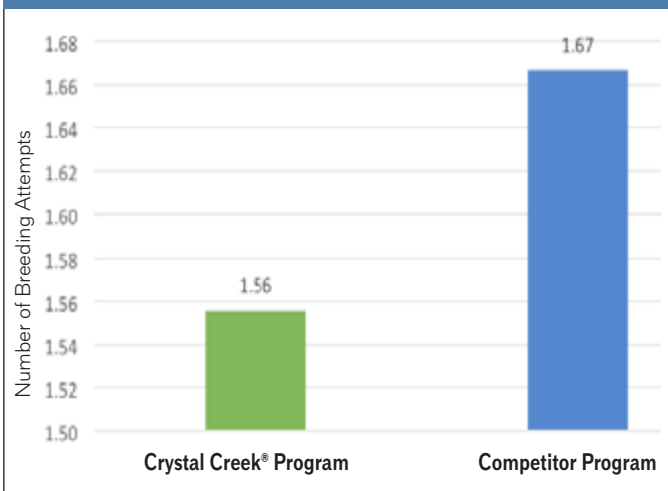
Heifer Performance

Calves on the Swift Start® calf feeding program had more uniform body weights and a much smoother transition into weaning. Many of the heifers that were fed the competitor's milk replacer and feed during the pre-wean period, did not survive to the time of breeding due to health issues. Animals in both groups were fed the same feed post-weaning. Heifers on the Swift Start® calf feeding program had significantly higher reproduction rates resulting in heifers reaching the milking herd sooner, meaning less time on feed and more milk profit.

Cow Performance

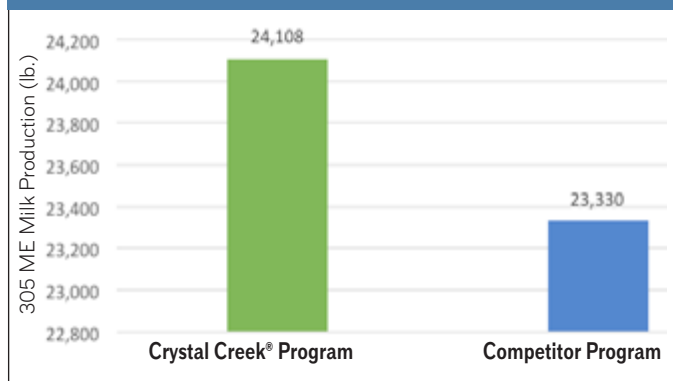
The animals in the Swift Start® group had a higher percentage of cows entering the milking herd, who experienced earlier calving, (between 22-25 months of age), produced an increased amount of milk, possessed better reproduction rates and demonstrated less cull rates vs. cows from the competitor feed program.

Figure 2 AVERAGE TIMES BRED WHILE IN MILKING HERD



This data shows the cows that entered the milking herd who had almost completed their first lactation. Cows that were raised on the Swift Start® calf feeding program required 7% less breeding attempts to conceive.

Figure 3 AVERAGE 305 ME MILK PRODUCTION (lb.)



Cows raised on the Swift Start® calf feeding program had 778 lb. more in milk production, resulting in higher milk income when compared to those raised on the competitor's program.

Economics

Figures 4 & 5 show the economical differences between the two programs and the associated pounds of milk and milk revenue. The Swift Start® calf feeding program saved the producer \$15.36 per calf on the cost of rearing during the pre-weaned phase. Those same calves went on to produce 778 more pounds of milk (on average) during their first lactation when compared to the calves fed the competitor's pre-weaned feed program.

Figure 4 COST OF RAISING CALVES

	Swift Start® Calf Feeding Program	Competitor Calf Feeding Program	Swift Start® Cost Savings/ Calf
Pre-weaned rearing costs	\$188.66	\$204.02	\$15.36

These costs took into consideration the cost of milk replacer, calf feed, supplements given and treatment costs. Calves raised on the Swift Start® feeding program were more economical to raise.

Figure 5 INCREASED MILK VOLUME AND REVENUE

	Swift Start® Calf Feeding Program	Competitor Calf Feeding Program	Swift Start® Advantage
305 ME Milk Production (lb.)	24,108	23,330	778
Milk Revenue (\$) Assuming \$18/cwt	\$4,339.44	\$4,199.40	+\$140.04

A comparison of calves raised on the Swift Start® calf feeding program and calves raised on the competitor feed program showed calves in the Swift Start® group had higher milk production and subsequent higher milk revenue.

The data collected with this trial consistently shows the Swift Start® calf feeding program continues to outperform others while delivering an increase in total profit to the producer. Call Crystal Creek® today to improve your herd profitability by feeding your calves with the Crystal Creek® Swift Start® Calf & Heifer Program. We are confident you will be glad you called.