

## Conventional versus 'Accelerated' Calf Feeding Programs

Traditionally, calves have been fed limited amounts of milk or milk replacer to promote dry feed consumption, rumen development and early weaning. As long as they remain healthy, calves generally exhibit compensatory ('catch up') growth after weaning. Under most milk and feed pricing situations, there is an economic advantage to this strategy.

In recent years, researchers have proposed programs where calves are offered nutrient intakes which are closer to those they would achieve if left with their dams. Results have been mixed. The photo below illustrates differences in growth of calves reared conventionally versus those on an accelerated program. In some trials, accelerated calves have maintained their growth advantage well beyond weaning. In others, the conventionally fed calves have gained more rapidly after weaning, reducing or eliminating the early growth advantage of the accelerated calves.

Calves raised on conventional liquid feeding program (left calf in each photo) compared with calves raised on accelerated program (right calf in each photo) at 8 weeks of age (left photo) and 14 weeks of age (right photo).

