

THE Connection

Summer 2026 Volume 8, No. 2



VEAL 
Farmers
of Ontario

IN THIS ISSUE

Meet VFO's newest director

A new perspective on Mycoplasma

Managing your COP



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Chair's MESSAGE



Philip Kroesbergen

Veal producers staying resourceful in a changing industry

This spring has had everyone talking about one thing in the veal industry – the price of calves. Every spring, veal farmers and calf feeders pay a premium to buy young calves, but this year has led to pricing that has been extreme. In the last five years, the top of the market has increased more and more proportionately.

To help visualize this, turn to page 28 and look at the bob calf pricing graph. In 2023, the spring market was strong with Holstein bull calves being pushed to \$400 - 500. The following spring, \$700 - 800. Then \$1,300 - 1,400 in spring 2025, and this year, increasing up to \$1,000 more than last spring! The amount of capital needed to purchase these animals has risen significantly and has put immense pressure on everyone in the industry.

How are veal producers going to justify this cost? Investing such a significant amount into the purchase of an animal knowing there is no margin to make in the fall is concerning. How will meat packers be able to process these expensive cattle and be able to cover their costs? The reality of this movement in the industry is that fewer calves are being raised and processed as veal cattle. There is no sugar-coating that fact. If supply shrinks and demand stays the same, then the equilibrium price should increase. Unfortunately, in our case in the industry, the price needs to increase but there is no appetite for retail consumers to pay more. It all comes down to basic economics, and the economics are saying that it is extremely tight for this year. As time moves into the summer, calf pricing will see some relief, but it's safe to say that the high pricing for calves will continue to be a challenge for this industry.

What can producers do about these high calf prices? I believe that while it's hard to justify the high pricing, there's still opportunity. Veal producers play an important role in this market. We need to keep the animals we have healthy and there's no room for high mortality. Thankfully, Veal Farmers of Ontario has many resources and programs to help with animal health. I encourage producers to look for resources on vealfarmers.ca, including the Veal Cattle Health section, under Producer Info, with relevant topics. The Healthy Calf Conference is a biennial event that is happening this year and will be another chance to hear practical and actionable advice.

When margins are tight, knowing your cost of production is necessary. An updated cost of production tool has been developed in concert with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Agribusiness, and can be found online at ontario.ca/page/cost-production-crops-and-livestock#section-2. This tool not only covers all costs associated with veal production but also includes a type of prediction model and risk analysis which may be useful for your operation.

Now more than ever, it makes sense to enrol in the Ontario Risk Management Program. This year is easily the most risk veal producers have ever taken. The program has been funded well, and there is a significant financial backstop for veal producers if there are losses.

All this is to say that producers need to be creative, diligent, and resourceful in these times to make their businesses work. Things like market forces we cannot control, but for the things we can control, there are ways to always improve efficiency or even the methods we use for production. I wish all of our producers and industry partners a good rest of the summer and good luck in the season ahead. 🍷

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Patrick MacCarthy

Building resilience together

Resilience has always been one of the most important qualities for success in agriculture. Whether facing market fluctuations, animal health challenges, labour shortages, changing regulations, or evolving consumer expectations, Ontario veal and dairy calf producers continue to demonstrate remarkable adaptability and determination.

At Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO), supporting resilience means ensuring producers have access to the tools, resources, partnerships, and information they need to navigate challenges and seize opportunities. This commitment to our members is reflected across all the work that VFO does and is highlighted throughout this edition of *The Connection*.

Supporting resilience also means investing in people. VFO is pleased to welcome Rachel Epworth as our new Member Services Coordinator. Rachel has an extensive background in working with producers and a passion for agriculture. VFO is also pleased to welcome Kevin Bowman to our Board of Directors. Kevin is relatively new to the veal industry and in his producer profile you will learn about the opportunities he saw to enter the veal industry and grow his family farm. VFO looks forward to the new perspectives and contributions Kevin will make around the board table to advance Ontario's veal and dairy calf sector.

Another key area of focus has been providing practical tools and education through our cost of production (COP) resources. While stronger market prices are certainly welcome, resilience means looking beyond today's returns and maintaining a clear understanding of your farm's COP. Input costs, labour, transportation, financing, and calf prices continue to fluctuate, making it more important than ever to know your numbers. As you will hear from Amanda Hammell, producers who understand their COP are better positioned to make informed management decisions, evaluate investments, and respond confidently when market conditions change. As input prices continue to rise, VFO is here to support producers in making informed decisions about their operations and navigate high bob calf prices.

As the value of veal cattle increases, the loss of cattle through whole and partial carcass condemnations remains a top concern for VFO. VFO continues to work with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Agribusiness and our industry partners through the Carcass Disposition Working Group. This Working Group brings diverse stakeholders together to develop recommendations that will help to create consistency in condemnation decision making in provincial plants and improve the

transparency and confidence in Ontario's inspection system. VFO's participation in the Working Group builds on the advocacy and research VFO has done to address the challenges producers face with carcass condemnations. Results from the Veal Quality Audit, which was funded through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, have been presented to the Working Group and are being used to form the recommendations.

As producers work to continue to reduce morbidity and mortality, one of the most valuable tools available to producers is our network of resources on calfcare.ca. As your calf care partners, VFO is pleased to provide these trusted resources to support producers in achieving better calf health and welfare. Through research, education, and technical expertise, VFO is here to help producers implement best management practices that contribute to healthier animals, stronger performance, and more resilient operations.

Complementing these tools, VFO has also expanded its educational offerings through webinars, podcasts, and recorded talks. The veal cattle health series features a webinar with Dr. Gabriel Ribeiro on managing liver abscesses and podcasts from Dr. Bart Pardon on respiratory health and antimicrobial use and Holly McGill on feeding veal cattle and the importance of fibre inclusion. These sessions provide producers with timely information on animal care, management practices, regulatory updates, and emerging industry issues. Whether listening in the tractor or accessing recordings afterward, producers can benefit from expert insights on their schedules.

As a producer-led organization, VFO's priorities are strongest when they are informed by our membership. Whether it is a challenge you are facing on the farm, a new opportunity you believe the sector should explore, or a resource that would help improve efficiency and profitability, we want to hear from you. Share your ideas on how VFO can help build a resilient veal cattle sector by emailing us at info@vealfarmers.ca.

The challenges facing our industry and the broader agriculture sector are complex, but resilience is built through preparation, knowledge, collaboration, and a strong support network. By investing in partnerships, practical tools, and ongoing education, VFO is helping ensure Ontario veal and dairy calf producers remain well-positioned for the future.

Patrick

VFO welcomes new Member Services Coordinator

Please welcome Rachel Epworth as the new Member Services Coordinator for VFO! Rachel has a life-long love of agriculture and comes to VFO with a background in livestock production systems, biosecurity, and regulatory compliance. Rachel is excited to be welcomed on to the team and looks forward to engaging with the VFO membership in her new role.



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PRODUCER PROFILE:



Kevin Bowman

Tell us a bit about yourself and how you got started in the veal industry.

My wife Courtney, our three children, and I live in Fordwich. I didn't grow up on a commercial farm, but my parents raised veal cattle when I was young. The family business soon took the forefront – the barn was used for our pets and most of the hutches were sold, although we did start a few calves occasionally as a hobby for my brothers and I.

Courtney and I were married in 2019. Around Christmas that year, the local dairy farmer renting my parents' second farm retired and Courtney couldn't bear the idea of a barn only five minutes away standing empty, so on my holidays we went to the sales barn and bought four bob calves as a project. We were soon hooked, driving around to local dairy farms on Saturdays picking up calves.

We sold the calves we started to my in-laws as precons for the first year until our daughter was born, and starting calves, holding a full-time job, and raising a baby became too much. Around this time my in-laws stopped raising veal and we took on their precon supply and switched from starting veal to finishing veal in a partnership with my younger brother.

In 2023, we bought our own 80-acre farm near Gorrie and spent our evenings and weekends extensively renovating the older pole barn for the next year. We moved our half of the veal cattle into our barn in 2024, when my brother took over farming at Dad's second farm. We still help each other, but each have our own operation now.

How do you manage your operation?

We have around 100 head of veal cattle, as well as 50 or so dairy-crosses.

Courtney does most of the feeding, and I do bedding, clean out, and maintenance. We sort, weigh, and treat calves together. I work off-farm full time for a construction company, so I try to keep the farming as simple and efficient as possible since all the chores get done mornings, evenings, and weekends.

We bring in preconditioned calves from one source. I trust our supplier to find quality calves, and he hasn't let us down. Our on-arrival protocols include weighing every group when they arrive, and then we weigh and sort weekly from about 650 lb. to finish. We ship four to five head to the sale each week.

We also buy all our corn since we don't have enough on-farm grain storage right now.

Have you experienced any challenges?

Our veal numbers are down a bit from previous years. Finding enough Holstein bull calves has been a challenge that probably won't go away any time soon. We have had to bring in some dairy-cross calves to keep the barn full.

Do you have any production tips for other veal producers?

Good lighting helps spot lagging calves and get it addressed before they get sicker. Putting good lights in the barn has paid for itself already.

What do you enjoy most about farming?

Working with my family and watching healthy calves grow.

What are you looking forward to as VFO's newest director?

Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) is always working hard in the background to keep the industry running smoothly. This year I was approached by a board member and asked if I would consider joining the VFO Board. After some thought I agreed, since I thought it would be a great way to understand the industry better as well as bring my perspective as a small

producer. I think there is still demand for veal, and we need to tirelessly keep going to maintain our share in the marketplace by bringing high-quality protein to the table.

Any future goals for yourself or your farm?

Moving from town to the farm, which is in the process currently, and after that add more feed storage, more barn space, and tile drainage.

What is the best piece of advice you can offer to other veal producers or someone looking to get into the veal industry?

Nobody is too small to count. And if you start in as a hobby, you might get hooked. 🐾



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Ask the Expert

Understanding and solving colostrum quality challenges



Dr. Cynthia Miltenburg

On behalf of the Bovine Ontario Animal Health Network

It's essential that calves ingest adequate volumes of high-quality colostrum in the first hours of life to achieve transfer of passive immunity. Testing on-farm Immunoglobulin G (IgG) concentration ensures the volume fed delivers adequate total IgG to the calf. A Brix refractometer can be used to estimate IgG concentration, recognizing that higher values are generally associated with better outcomes. Test results can guide feeding decisions in real time. If the dam's colostrum does not meet targets, it can be enriched with a colostrum replacer powder or replaced with high-quality frozen, stored colostrum.

Colostrum with ≥ 50 g/L IgG (approximately 22 per cent Brix) is considered high quality. However, this threshold may not be sufficient in all situations. When feeding three litres at the first feeding, aiming closer to 24 per cent Brix may be necessary to achieve the goal of delivering at least 200 g of IgG. Higher Brix readings reflect substantially greater IgG concentrations – for example, values around 25.8% predict ≥ 100 g/L IgG. Many producers are therefore targeting higher Brix values and reporting improved transfer of passive immunity, calf health, and performance.

What happens if too many cows are producing colostrum that does not meet quality standards? Individual, seasonal, environmental, nutritional, and management factors can all influence colostrum yield and IgG concentrations. In these cases, a herd-level review might be in order. To guide this process, key factors associated with colostrum quality are reviewed below.

Confirm this is truly a quality problem

The first goal is to confirm it's a true quality problem, not a measurement error or due to delayed sampling. Questions we would ask are:

- Are Brix readings taken immediately after first harvest? Pooled colostrum from multiple milkings can result in lower readings.
- Has the refractometer been calibrated? Distilled water should be used to obtain a reading of 0 per cent on optical refractometers or use the zeroing function for digital refractometers.
- If using a colostrometer, is colostrum at the right temperature? These tools require colostrum to be at 22°C to be accurate.

Look for patterns in at-risk cows

Reviewing which cows have poor vs. adequate colostrum readings can tell us who is at risk of failing. While individual cow factors, including genetics, may play a role, the goal is to identify any herd-level patterns.

Multiparous cows generally produce higher IgG concentrations. If failure is disproportionately affecting primiparous cows, targeted support through nutrition or pen management may be needed. A higher incidence of stillbirths has also been associated with reduced colostrum IgG. Some studies suggest higher colostrum quality in cows delivering male calves or twins, although this finding is inconsistent and may relate more to calf size than sex. Reviewing affected groups can help identify common risk factors.

Assess the season and risk for heat stress

Research shows a complex relationship between season, environmental conditions such as exposure to light and heat stress, and colostrum quality. Several U.S. studies report reduced IgG concentrations during summer months (June to August), but seasonality varies in other global studies. These effects may relate to temperature and humidity or a disruption of hormone signalling. Other colostrum components vary seasonally: fat tends to be higher in spring, protein higher in fall and winter, and lactose tends to be lower in the summer.

Late gestation heat stress affects both the cow and the developing bovine fetus, resulting in lower birth weights, reduced immune function, reduced transfer of passive immunity, and increased disease risk. Regardless of the month on the calendar, where cattle are exposed to heat stress, heat abatement strategies have been shown to influence colostrum production. Cooled cows produce more colostrum with an elevated IgG concentration compared to heat-stressed cows. While reduced feed intake contributes, it does not fully explain colostrum losses, reinforcing the importance of thermal management of dry cows. If poor quality results are linked with seasonal temperatures, review heat abatement in dry cows.

Prepartum management, metabolic status, and nutrition

Shortening the dry period has been shown to reduce colostrum yield, but its effect on IgG concentration is less consistent. To support cows through a successful transition, reviewing the experience of the cow in the dry cow pen, including time there and stocking density, is worthwhile. Management stress likely matters more than exact dry period length.

Over-conditioning may negatively impact colostrum quality. Increasing dietary starch prepartum has been associated with lower IgG concentra-

tions, higher insulin levels, and altered fatty acid profiles. In contrast, fat supplementation appears to have minimal effect. Younger cows may benefit from additional metabolizable protein to support mammary epithelial cell turnover in the dry period, but overall, protein over-supplementation does not seem to be a reliable strategy to improve colostrum quality. Similarly, the evidence for improvements in IgG concentration from specific vitamins or minerals is limited.

An altered metabolic or inflammatory state of cows in late gestation has been linked to reduced colostrum quality. Prepartum blood profiles on cows in the close-up dry period may provide insight on herd-level trends for glucose, albumin, calcium, and indicators of inflammation or reduced liver function. However, these relationships are complex and may reflect broader transition cow challenges, rather than a colostrum-specific issue. As such, results should be interpreted in the wider context of transition cow performance, including health events and milk production outcomes.

Harvest timing and handling

Post-harvest practices can reduce measurable IgG if poorly managed. Delayed collection, particularly when not harvested until six to nine hours post-calving results in dilution of IgG as colostrum transitions to milk. If many samples are just below the 22 per cent Brix cut-off, harvest timing may be the root cause.

Colostrum composition varies across individual cows, herds, and seasons. Colostrogenesis begins three to five weeks before calving, emphasizing the importance of supporting cows throughout the dry period, especially during the hot summer months. Improving colostrum quality through prepartum nutrition and management is an achievable goal but closely linked to overall transition cow health. Aim to harvest high-quality colostrum in ≥ 90 per cent of samples tested. Effective troubleshooting begins with the who, when, and how it was harvested. If you are not meeting your targets, talk to your herd advisors. 

Key areas for investigation

- 1 Harvest timing and verify first milking
- 2 Proper refractometer use
- 3 Parity distribution
- 4 Heat stress and seasonal management
- 5 Late gestation metabolic health

References available upon request.



The Bovine Ontario Animal Health Network is a group of veterinarians and specialists working in government, university research, and laboratory, and in beef, dairy, and veal practice who meet regularly to monitor and discuss disease trends in Ontario. Our goals are to facilitate coordinated preparedness, early detection, and response to animal health and welfare in Ontario. For our recent reports or more information visit www.oahn.ca.

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Tips for unlocking growth in dairy-cross calves

Lilian Schaer
For Veal Farmers of Ontario

Moving to an accelerated milk feeding program and better weaning management may be two of the biggest opportunities Ontario veal producers have to improve performance in dairy-cross calves.

This stems from research presented by University of Guelph PhD candidate Titouan Chapelain during Veal Farmers of Ontario's Annual General Meeting and Producer Education Day on March 18.

In traditional feeding programs, calves are offered milk twice daily, and starter from an early age to encourage rumen development; new research is suggesting, however, that this approach could be leaving growth on the table.

"Early growth matters," Chapelain said, linking calf performance in the first weeks of life directly to cost of gain.

In fact, growth problems early on become an "economic burden," especially during the more costly milk-feeding phase, so the goal for producers should be to help calves get a strong start so they can grow steadily, stay healthy, and come through weaning without a setback.

The first key to success is colostrum management. Chapelain stressed that while producers buying calves may not control what happens at birth, they are the ones that will be impacted by the consequences. Good transfer of passive immunity depends on colostrum quality, quantity, and timing.

This means colostrum above 22 per cent Brix or 60 g/L IgG, fed at more than 10 per cent of birth body weight in the first 12 hours, with the first meal within one hour of birth. Calves can then be classified on arrival by serum total protein, ranging from poor to excellent transfer of passive immunity.

Calves with weaker passive immunity are more likely to struggle, he noted, and showed data indicating dairy-cross calves outperformed Holsteins in several areas.

This includes lower diarrhea risk, fewer repeat respiratory treatments, higher starter intake around weaning, and stronger body weight and average daily gain; in some growth measures, they outperformed Holstein calves by three, six, and seven kilograms.

Veal producers should therefore both work closely with their calf suppliers to understand colostrum practices and assess calf status on arrival whenever possible.

"If you see calves not performing well then you can probably go to your supplier of calves and discuss with them," Chapelain said.

A growing body of research is suggesting that feeding colostrum beyond the first day of life was linked to lower diarrhea risk, improved average daily gain, and higher starter intake, with some studies also showing reduced duration of diarrhea and pneumonia.

Separate work using colostrum at the onset of disease was associated with faster diarrhea resolution and greater gain, and although researchers still need to refine the best protocols, Chapelain suggested discussion about colostrum supplementation would likely become more common.

The bigger challenge to long-standing calf-feeding practices relates to milk volume, however. Calves are generally offered milk twice daily, and starter from an early age to encourage rumen development, but different approaches could be getting calves off to a better start, according to various research results.

One study showed that moderate milk intake helped calves compensate for poor transfer of passive immunity, while low milk intake reduced growth potential in calves with good immunity and was especially harmful for calves with poor immunity.

Another trial found calves fed 10 litres per day instead of five had increased average daily gain and body weight, along with reduced cost of gain in the first two weeks. A separate comparison of four versus eight litres per day showed a 22-kilogram body weight advantage and an 85 per cent heavier liver in calves receiving the eight litres daily, underlining how deeply early feeding can affect development.

While it's not realistic to expect veal producers to feed 10 litres a day, Chapelain did urge them to think about finding a workable middle ground.

"Feeding low volumes of milk replacer is enough for maintenance but not for growth, whereas moderate to high volumes are an investment that could pay off long-term," he noted.

It is possible that milk composition may matter too, but more research is needed to draw definitive conclusions in this field – and there is currently no milk replacer formula tailored specifically for dairy-cross calves.

Starter feed is another piece of the puzzle, but again, hard recommendations are limited for dairy-cross calves. One caution was clear, though:

starch above 40 per cent of dry matter raises the risk of acidosis so if feeding high-starch, finely ground or pelleted diets, some forage is recommended, but it should stay below 10 per cent of daily intake.

"Weaning is the key," he said, adding that even strong early feeding programs can be undermined by weaning calves too early or too abruptly.

Calves move at weaning from getting energy through milk digestion to getting it from rumen fermentation. If that transition happens before starter intake is high enough, calves can lose energy intake and growth.

A few takeaway tips for producers:

- do not fully wean before eight weeks of age,
- stretch the weaning process over at least two weeks,
- step calves down gradually,
- only cut off milk when they are eating 1.5 kilograms of starter per day for three consecutive days.

"Feeding moderate to high volumes of milk replacer is an investment that pays off long-term," Chapelain said. "Weaning can make calves thrive or sink so plan your weaning protocol wisely."

Producers are encouraged to discuss weaning protocols with their veterinarian or nutritionist as part of overall herd management strategies. Information is also available at calfcare.ca.

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Amanda Hammell
Senior Manager, Farm Management
Consulting
MNP



Building financial resilience: Capital access and cost control for today's farms



Titouan Chapelain, PhD candidate
University of Guelph



Feeding dairy-cross calves for success: From day one to weaning



Jeff Caswell, DVM, DVSc, PhD, Dipl ACVP
Professor, Department of Pathobiology
University of Guelph



An overview of *Mycoplasma bovis* disease in calves

Can a free access acidified milk replacer feeding program improve the health and growth of calves started for veal production?

James Byrne, Beef Cattle Specialist
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Agribusiness

Traditional milk feeding programs offer daily milk intake between eight and 10 per cent of calf birth body weight to encourage quick transition to solid feed thereby enabling earlier weaning, reducing the risk of scours, and reducing the cost of feeding and management. Research by Davis and Drackley, 1998, showed that limiting milk intake achieved none of the objectives of traditional milk feeding programs. In contrast, enhanced feeding programs permit calves to consume larger quantities of whole milk or high-protein milk replacer. Several studies have demonstrated that enhanced feeding programs reduce signs of hunger and show higher growth performance compared to traditional milk feeding programs.

Free access to acidified milk replacer is being adopted by a growing number of Canadian dairy and veal producers, (Anderson, 2008). Free access is a practice where calves have ad libitum access to milk replacer, usually through automated feeders or acidified systems. To prevent the growth of undesirable bacteria, some type of milk preservation is necessary, such as acidification. Acidification of milk replacer involves the addition of an organic acid, typically formic acid, to enable ad libitum consumption so that milk replacer can be fed at ambient temperature in the summer and at 20 to 24°C in cold housing in the winter. Following reconstitution, the target pH is between 5 and 5.5. Several researchers have shown that calves fed acidified milk replacer ad libitum have improved dry matter intake (DMI), greater average daily gain (ADG), lower rates of calf scours, and less veterinary care when compared to traditional milk feeding programs.

There are several ways to acidify milk replacer. The on-farm option involves cooling the prepared milk replacer to 20°C or less and adding prediluted formic acid until the target pH is achieved. A waterproof pH meter is necessary to determine when the target pH is achieved. Lowering the pH will allow milk replacer to be stored for up to three days without any bacterial growth making it suitable for ad libitum systems.

Alternatively, milk replacer can be purchased pre-acidified to give a pH of 5.5 once reconstituted. The advantages of purchasing pre-acidified milk replacer are that it avoids the need to purchase prediluted formic acid, a pH meter, and the associated cleaning solution and buffering

solution. The purchased pre-acidified milk replacer should achieve a consistent target pH at reconstitution.

Research by Grober Nutrition, (2012), shows that calves fed free access acidified milk replacer outperformed (ADG) regular milk replacers. Health events were lower for acidified milk replacer, compared with regular milk replacer. This research agrees with the research literature that shows acidification has a beneficial effect in reducing the number of health events in young calves.

A more recent study, (Todd et al., 2016) compared the impact of feeding free access acidified milk replacer on pre- and post-weaning health, pre- and post-weaning growth rate, and carcass quality of veal cattle to calves fed a traditional milk feeding program of three litres fed twice daily. The calves in the study were fed either an acidified milk replacer or a regular (unacidified) milk replacer. All calves had ad libitum access to the same commercial calf ration, fresh water, no access to forage during the pre-weaning phase, and were transitioned to a standard veal diet of ad libitum corn and pellets post-weaning, (from six weeks of age). Calves were not dehorned or castrated, and were harvested between 660 and 770 lb.

Table 1 below summarizes the results of this trial:

	Free access acidified milk replacer	Restricted access to regular milk replacer
Pre-weaning disease treatment (%)	1.2	5.2
Pre-weaning mortality (%)	2.8	3.2
Post-weaning disease treatment (%)	36.4	29.4
Post-weaning mortality (%)	10.1	12.7
Pre-weaning ADG (lb./day)	1.3	0.95
Post-weaning ADG (lb./day)	2.93	3.0
Average liveweight at harvest (lb.)	712	715

Free access acidified milk replacer consumption rates were not measured in this trial, but several researchers have calculated that consumption rates up to 10 litres per day are possible. High milk replacer consumption

rates usually result in lower solid feed intake prior to weaning. This research trial shows that calves given free access to acidified milk replacer achieve higher ADG than calves on a traditional feeding program in the pre-weaning phase. Post-weaning ADG was similar for both groups, indicating that pre-weaning milk replacer choice has no impact on post-weaning performance.

Acidification of milk powder lowered the rates of pre-weaning disease treatment by 76 per cent compared to restricted access calves and had 12.5 per cent lower rates of pre-weaning mortality. The reduction in disease treatments in the pre-weaning period may be reflective of the increased milk nutrient intake for free access calves and not just on acidification alone.

In conclusion, feeding free access acidified milk replacer leads to a reduction in disease treatment rates during the pre-weaning phase and a significant reduction in mortality rates pre- and post-weaning compared to traditional feeding programs. Giving calves free access to acidified milk replacer improves ADG during the pre-weaning phase compared to calves on traditional feeding programs. Producers should weigh the cost-benefits of reduced disease treatment and mortality rates from free access acidified milk replacer feeding programs, the higher cost of milk acidification, (whether acidified on-farm or pre-purchased), and the lower ADG post-weaning when making their feeding program decisions.



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Mycoplasma bovis driven by inflammation and co-infection, not just exposure

Lilian Schaer

For Veal Farmers of Ontario

Calf Care Corner

FROM SCIENCE TO PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS



New research is reshaping how farmers should think about *Mycoplasma bovis* in calves, suggesting that exposure alone is not what drives disease. It's actually what happens after exposure that matters more.

Most calves exposed to *Mycoplasma bovis* never get sick. It's the presence of stress and co-infection, especially inflammation in the respiratory tract, that appears to determine whether calves progress to clinical disease.

"By far the majority of those infected calves will appear clinically healthy," said Dr. Jeff Caswell, Professor in the Department of Pathobiology at the Ontario Veterinary College. "So just because you detect *Mycoplasma bovis* doesn't mean it's responsible for the disease."

For veal producers, that distinction matters. It shifts the focus away from trying to eliminate the pathogen — which is likely unrealistic — and more toward managing the conditions that allow it to cause damage.

Mycoplasma bovis is widespread in cattle populations and spreads quickly, especially when calves are commingled. According to Caswell, feedlot studies have shown that within two weeks of arrival, the majority of calves are affected. Transmission is primarily through nose-to-nose contact, milk or colostrum from infected cows, and movement and mixing of calves from multiple sources.

Unlike many bacteria, *Mycoplasma bovis* behaves differently in several important ways that make it difficult to control. It lacks a cell wall, making some common antibiotics ineffective, it doesn't produce toxins (damage is caused by the calf's immune response), and it can linger inside an animal for months. It's a combination, Caswell noted, that explains why treatment outcomes are often inconsistent.

The most recognized form of *Mycoplasma bovis* is pneumonia, but not the typical acute respiratory disease producers might expect.

"This is always a chronic disease. Even if it appears suddenly, it's been developing for at least two weeks," he said.

The classic lesion — caseonecrotic bronchopneumonia — involves firm lung tissue in the front and lower lobes of the organ, and distinct nodules filled with thick, cheese-like material. These lesions are more than just diagnostic clues; they also help explain poor treatment response.

"If you give an injectable antibiotic, it's plausible you're not going to eradicate the bacterium from a lesion like that — you just can't get antibiotics into that dead lung tissue," he added.

Beyond pneumonia, producers should also watch for ear infections (head tilt, droopy ears) and joint infections (lameness, swelling). Joint infections in particular are difficult to treat and can significantly impact performance.

One of the most important findings that research has highlighted is the disconnect between infection and disease. Even in heavily exposed groups of calves, infection rates can reach 70 to 80 per cent of the animals, but only some actually develop clinical signs.

So what makes the difference? The answer appears to be inflammation and co-infection, according to Caswell.

Experimental work showed that calves exposed to *Mycoplasma bovis* alone developed fewer and milder lung lesions. But when an additional inflammatory stimulus — such as another bacterial infection — was present, disease severity increased significantly.

"It seems that one of the reasons animals progress to clinical disease may be that they have some other inflammatory stimulus at the same time," Caswell said, adding that this aligns with field observations where respiratory disease is often complex and involves multiple pathogens and stressors.

These findings help explain why *Mycoplasma bovis* cases can be frustrating to manage on the farm. One of the biggest challenges is antibiotic resistance. Because the bacteria lack cell walls, some antibiotics like penicillin don't work; at the same time, resistance to other antibiotic classes is common and variable.

Another major hurdle is physical barriers to treatment. Dead lung tissue and joint lesions limit drug penetration, and while calves may appear to respond, they can relapse after treatment stops. Together, these factors mean treatment is often only partially effective, especially in advanced cases.

Ultimately, *Mycoplasma bovis* is not just a respiratory pathogen, it's a disease shaped by the interaction between infection, inflammation, and management. That's why understanding it matters when it comes to

keeping calves healthy; managing stress, co-infection, and overall calf health can have a greater impact on outcomes than just focusing on the pathogen itself.

For Caswell, the key message for producers is clear: you may not be able to keep your calves from being exposed, but you can influence whether that exposure turns into a problem for your herd.

Producers should work with their herd veterinarians to develop a protocol and/or treatment plan, and while eliminating *Mycoplasma bovis* is not realistic, here are tips for reducing its impact:

- 1. Focus on preventing co-infection.** Because inflammation is a key trigger, it's important to maintain strong overall calf health, manage respiratory disease risks, and minimize exposure to other pathogens as much as possible.
- 2. Manage commingling risk.** Mixing calves from multiple sources increases exposure, so limit commingling wherever possible and if you are comingling, know that newly assembled groups of calves are at high risk.

3. Support immune function. Healthy calves are less likely to progress to disease. To keep them healthy, ensure proper colostrum intake, give them the best nutrition possible, reduce stress during transport and arrival on-farm, and provide good ventilation and housing.

4. Pay attention to milk management. Infected or subclinical cows can shed bacteria in milk. Pasteurization or acidification can reduce transfer risk to calves.

5. Identify and manage clinical cases early. Sick animals tend to shed a lot of the bacterium into their environment, so early treatment as well as keeping them away from healthy animals can help reduce the spread of infection.

6. Set realistic expectations. The goal should be management, not elimination, as eradicating *Mycoplasma bovis* is difficult or probably impossible, noted Caswell. 🐄



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Security from Trespass Act upheld

Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) was pleased to see the June 3, 2026, Ontario Court of Appeal decision to uphold key provisions of the *Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act*. Unauthorized access to farms can create significant risks to animal health and welfare, food safety, and farm and employee safety. Protecting farms from these risks helps safeguard the animals in our care, supports strong biosecurity practices and maintains consumer confidence in Ontario's food system. Ontario farm families depend on the safety and security of their farms to raise livestock, and grow and produce safe, high-quality food. Ontario's veal farmers are committed to ensuring the highest standards of animal care and biosecurity, protecting people, animals, and the province's food supply.

Interest-free limit of APP increased for 2026

VFO welcomes the announcement from the Government of Canada that set the interest-free limit of the Advance Payments Program (APP) at \$250,000 for the 2026 program year, up from the base amount of \$100,000 interest-free. The APP gives producers easy access to low-cost cash advances of up to one million dollars, based on the expected value of their agricultural products. This change is an important tool to help veal farmers address cash flow and inflationary challenges. VFO continues to advocate to permanently increase the interest-free portion of the APP to \$350,000.

Farmland now exempt from stormwater management fees

The provincial government has announced a new policy to exempt farmland from stormwater management fees. The change will remove municipal authority to impose stormwater fees and charges on portions of properties classified as farmland or managed forests, where those areas are not connected to a municipal storm sewer system. This change responds to ongoing concerns from farmers about the financial burden of these fees and helps support farmers facing rising operational costs. VFO thanks the Province of Ontario for their support of the agri-food sector and their commitment to helping Ontario farmers grow and remain competitive.

New legislation aims to protect Ontario's food independence

On April 22, 2026, the Ontario government introduced the *Protecting Ontario's Food Independence Act, 2026*. This legislation, if passed, would protect local ownership of provincial agriculture by creating restrictions on foreign acquisition of Ontario farmland. It would also support the growth of agricultural production in the Northern Ontario Clay Belt, and modernize, streamline, and improve regulations for the agri-food sector and reduce red tape for industry partners. Alongside these changes, the province is also taking next steps to update its Grow Ontario Strategy to build a more competitive, resilient, and self-reliant agri-food sector in the face of US tariffs and economic uncertainty.

Canadian Veal
Association



Association
canadienne du veau

EU Deforestation Regulation update

On May 4, 2026, the European Commission (the Commission) published a package of measures to simplify implementation of the revised EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR). This review was mandated as part of the December 2025 simplification, which called on the Commission to conduct a review and bring forward legislative proposals. The draft delegated act proposes the removal of leather, and hides and skins, from scope, along with other exclusions. The removal of these products addresses a longstanding Canadian Veal Association concern with these regulations and reduces the burden for Canadian exporters into the important European market. 🐾

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Draft program is subject to change.



▶ **Wednesday, June 3**
**Building financial
resilience: Capital
access and cost control
for today's farms**

Amanda Hammell, Senior Manager, Farm Management
Consulting

MNP

Boost your farm's financial strength with practical strategies to manage rising costs and access the capital you need for growth. This session delivers clear, actionable tools to manage cash flow, control expenses, and position your operation for long-term success.



▶ **Wednesday, June 17**
**Economics of
feeding veal cattle**

John Molenhuis, Business Analysis and Cost of
Production Specialist

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Agribusiness

With calf prices at unprecedented levels, knowing your cost of production is as important as ever. This session will work through the process of calculating your cost of production and highlight the impacts to changes in market prices and production costs.



▶ **Coming soon!**
**Market situation and
outlook**

Steve Duff, Chief Economist

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Agribusiness

Steve will share an update on the North American cattle market and highlight key trends from the past year and where 2026 appears to be going. This presentation will provide critical insights for producers navigating market uncertainties and planning for sustainable growth.

Questions for our speakers?

Email them to events@vealfarmers.ca and the responses will be shared in the *Finishing grain-fed veal in Ontario* private Facebook group.



Scan the QR code or visit vealfarmers.ca/on-demand to access the webinars on their release dates.

Strong markets are an opportunity to build resilience



Lilian Schaer

For Veal Farmers of Ontario

Strong veal prices and rising calf values are putting more pressure – not less – on farm finances, with tighter margins emerging beneath the surface.

According to Amanda Hammell, Senior Manager, Farm Management Consulting at MNP, strong prices do not remove the need for discipline and if anything, this is the time to tighten up the numbers, understand true costs, and make sure the business is built to handle the next shock.

“In my opinion, there's been a lot of margin made in the last couple of years,” Hammell said in a presentation at the recent Veal Farmers of Ontario Annual General Meeting and Producer Education Day. “The margins are now thin.”

The key is resilience – the ability of a farm to absorb shocks, adapt, and keep moving forward in volatile conditions.

“The way I look at this is being agile in your business,” she said. “How quickly can we rebound? How quickly can we absorb a market shock?”

That question is especially relevant in the veal sector, where calf prices have surged in recent years – in some cases by more than 100 per cent – while feed, interest, and other input costs have also climbed. At the same time, veal supply remains tight, with production declining and competition for calves intensifying.

According to Hammell, those pressures make it critical for farmers to understand exactly where they stand financially, starting with working capital.

Working capital, which is the difference between current assets and current liabilities, includes everything from cattle inventory and feed to operating loans, payables, and the portion of long-term debt due within the year.

“If you don't know your working capital position right now, that is the one thing I will challenge you to do when we go home,” she said.

A strong working capital position gives producers flexibility to handle higher purchase prices, manage cash flow swings, and respond to unexpected events. Without it, even profitable farms can run into liquidity issues.

Alongside cash flow, Hammell emphasized the importance of knowing true cost of production. That means going beyond broad estimates and calculating costs on a per-unit basis – per calf or per pound of gain – including all inputs, labour, fuel, interest, and overhead.

That level of detail helps producers make better decisions, especially when it comes to managing costs.

“The easy thing to do when we're losing money is to cut costs,” Hammell said. “But I'm not sure that's the right answer all the time.”

Instead, she encouraged farmers to focus on which costs actually drive performance. For example, cutting high-impact inputs such as feed strategies that support growth can hurt profitability more than it helps. At the same time, smaller inefficiencies like underused equipment, poor inventory tracking, and delayed maintenance can quietly erode margins.

Debt structure is another area where discipline matters. Hammell stressed the importance of matching financing to the purpose of the investment like using operating lines for short-term needs like feed and calves, and term loans for longer-term assets such as equipment or barns.

Using short-term credit for long-term purchases can leave farms short of working capital when they need it most.

“When costs increase you have to be reassessing your operating credit,” she said, noting that higher calf prices alone may justify increasing borrowing limits.

She also encouraged producers to stress test their business. What happens if feed costs rise by 10 or 20 per cent? What if interest rates increase? What if something disrupts production?

Farmers do not need perfect answers, she said, but asking those questions helps identify risk and build resilience.

“Resilience isn't built in the good years, it's built in the hard ones,” Hammell said.

Looking at the broader market, Hammell noted that veal remains a niche protein closely tied to both beef and dairy trends. Strong demand for protein and tight cattle supplies have supported prices, but she

cautioned that current conditions may not hold.

“The goal of the business I think for the next couple years is not to hit home runs,” she said. “You have got to hit singles and doubles all the way through.”

That means focusing on consistency and discipline rather than aggressive expansion. For some farms, that could mean improving efficiency or replacing existing infrastructure rather than growing capacity.

Hammell also encouraged producers to lean on their advisory team, including lenders, accountants, veterinarians, and nutritionists, and to review financial performance regularly.

For farms operating in a volatile, non-supply-managed sector like veal, she recommends monthly cash flow tracking and decision-making based on real numbers, not estimates.

Her final message was simple: strong markets create opportunity, but also risk if farms are not prepared.

“It's always good to ask for money when you've had a really good year,” she said.

For veal producers, that means using today's conditions to build a more resilient business – one that can withstand whatever comes next. ♡

Financial resilience checklist for producers

- Know your working capital: Make sure current assets exceed current liabilities, including the current portion of long-term debt.
- Track true cost of production: Calculate costs per calf or per pound, including labour, fuel, interest, and overhead.
- Protect performance-driving inputs: Do not cut costs that directly impact growth and animal performance.
- Fix small inefficiencies: Underused equipment, poor inventory tracking, and delayed maintenance can erode margins over time.
- Match debt to the asset and reassess credit needs: Use operating credit for short-term needs and term loans for long-term investments.
- Stress test your business: Model scenarios for higher feed costs, interest rates or production disruptions.
- Focus on consistency, not expansion: Prioritize steady returns over high-risk growth in a volatile market.
- Review finances monthly: Regular tracking helps identify issues early and improve decision-making.

A close-up photograph of a black and white cow's face, looking directly at the camera. The background is a soft, out-of-focus field. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

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Knowing and managing your cost of production matters more than ever

John Molenhuis, Business Analysis & Cost of Production Specialist

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Agribusiness

High bob calf prices have changed the cost structure for veal farms. Today, calf purchases represent a much larger share of total costs than in the past. Since calf prices are driven by the cattle market, farmers will have little control over them. The key decision is whether buying calves at current prices still makes sense for your business.

This is not an easy choice. Facility and overhead costs continue whether the barn is full or empty. Understanding your cost of production is the first step to making informed decisions. Once you know your costs, you are in a better position to manage them.

There are two main ways to calculate cost of production:

1 Production system approach

The production system approach is mainly a planning tool. It looks forward and estimates future costs and revenues based on expected prices and production practices. It is useful when you are planning changes, comparing alternatives, or deciding how best to use your land, labour, and capital.

This approach may not reflect your actual average cost of production. Instead, it shows an estimated cost of production based on assumptions such as calf prices, feeding programs, and productivity.

Building a production system model starts with physical details rather than dollars. These include things like:

- Types and amounts of feed
- Number of days on feed
- Health program
- Purchase weight and sale weight
- Death loss percentage
- Labour hours for daily work and management
- Building and equipment needs

Once these details are set, input prices, labour rates, and investment costs are added. The result is an estimated annual cost of production.

The production system approach is especially useful for:

- Making purchase decisions
- Evaluating changes to feeding or other production practices
- Identifying opportunities to improve efficiency or productivity

2 On-farm historical data approach

The on-farm data approach uses your actual income and expense records to calculate cost of production. Its purpose is to show your cost of production based on past performance. Using records from the past three to five years provides the best picture of average enterprise costs and profitability.

A major challenge with this approach is that most farms have more than one enterprise. Costs need to be allocated across enterprises to calculate enterprise-level cost of production.

Some costs are easy to assign. Direct costs such as calf purchases, purchased feed, and veterinary expenses are clearly tied to a specific enterprise.

Other costs are more difficult. Indirect variable costs (fuel, repairs, labour) and fixed costs (insurance, interest, depreciation) are shared across the farm and must be allocated.

Common cost allocation methods include:

• Per cent of sales

Example: If veal sales account for 60 per cent of total farm sales, then 60 per cent of overhead costs are allocated to the veal enterprise.

• Per cent of expenses

Example: If veal accounts for 70 per cent of total operating expenses, then 70 per cent of operating interest is allocated to veal.

• Time spent in the enterprise

Example: If labour spends 80 per cent of their time working with veal, then 80 per cent of labour costs are allocated to veal.

• Amount used in the enterprise

Example: If machinery is used 40 per cent of the time for veal, then 40 per cent of machinery fuel, repairs, and insurance costs are allocated to veal.

No single allocation method works for every expense. Use the method that best reflects how each resource is used on your farm. Once you establish allocation rules, keep them consistent unless the farm operation changes. Consistency improves year-to-year comparisons.

One limitation of on-farm financial data is the lack of production detail. For example, accounting records may show total feed costs but not the amount fed by ingredient. While costs are accurate, more production detail is needed to identify specific opportunities for cost control.

Planning tools are available

Tools are available to help farmers calculate and manage cost of production.

Veal cost of production budgeting tool

The veal cost of production budgeting tool was updated in late 2025. It helps farmers estimate annual costs and use this information for planning.

Figures 1 and 2 show how the cost structure has changed since the last update in 2019. In 2019, livestock purchases represented 13 per cent of total estimated costs. By 2025, this had increased to 55 per cent.

This change reflects much higher calf prices. The other costs have also risen but not to the same degree. As a result, livestock purchases now make up a larger share of total costs.

The figures in the tool are based on an economic model. Actual results will vary between farms depending on prices, production practices, and productivity.

Figure 1. Veal Cost of Production (2019)

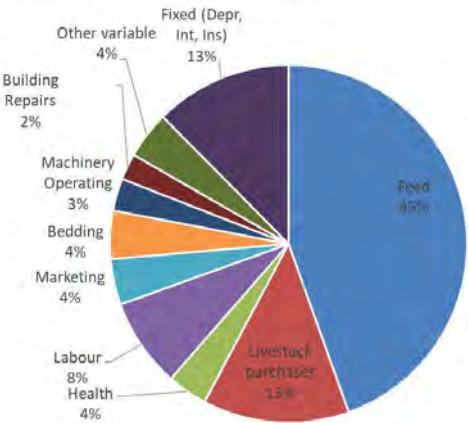
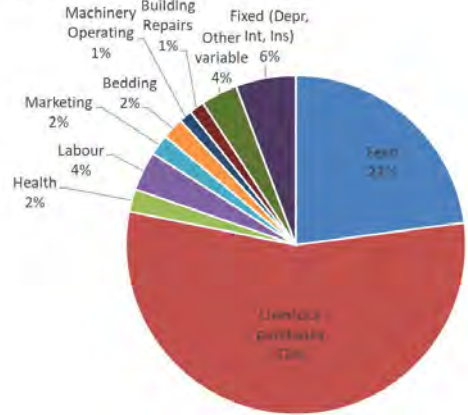


Figure 2. Veal Cost of Production (2025)



The veal budgeting tool, along with tools for 75 other crop and livestock commodities, is available on the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) cost of production website, ontario.ca/agbusiness.

Farm financial analyzer

The OMAFA farm financial analyzer uses your historical farm data to measure cost of production, profitability, and financial efficiency. It is available through the Farm Business Decision Calculators section of the cost of production website, ontario.ca/agbusiness.

Choosing the right approach

Both cost of production approaches have value. The best option depends on how you plan to use the information. Farmers benefit from using both.

Good cost of production information depends on good records. If your current recordkeeping system does not allow you to estimate costs by enterprise, consider making changes now. Better information leads to better decisions. 

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INDUSTRY UPDATES



VFO talks with producers at CDX



Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) was at the Canadian Dairy XPO (CDX) in Stratford on April 1 and 2, connecting with dairy and veal producer members, answering questions about industry issues and calf care, and sharing resources. Participating in events alongside our industry partners reinforces our ongoing commitment to supporting the dairy and dairy-cross calf and veal cattle sectors.

Thank you to everyone who dropped by our booth! We look forward to seeing you again at Canada's Outdoor Farm Show in September.

VFO attends Grow Ontario Food Summit



VFO was pleased to participate in the annual Grow Ontario Food Summit hosted by the Honourable Trevor Jones, Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Agribusiness.

Colleagues from across the agri-food spectrum gathered at the Delta

Hotel in Guelph on April 7, to discuss agri-food investment, trade diversification, market challenges, and opportunities to protect Ontario's agri-food industry.

VFO appreciates the opportunity to connect with our industry, academia, and government partners as we work together to strengthen Ontario's agri-food sector.

VFO supports Producer Day at the University of Guelph



VFO was pleased to support the University of Guelph's Producer Day on Saturday, May 23, as part of our sponsorship of the International Scientific Meeting on Colostrum II.

It was an excellent opportunity to engage with calf-raisers and learn more about the newest recommendations for colostrum and calf health.

VFO celebrates Local Food Week



June 1 to 7 was Local Food Week. This year's celebration focused on the connection between Ontarians and the food grown and made right here at home, highlighting how choosing local supports communities, strengthens the economy, and keeps our food system close and resilient. VFO

promoted Local Food Week on our social accounts, thanking our supply chain partners. Producers were also encouraged to get involved on social using #loveONfood. 🐮

OLPC biosecurity resources



Susan Fitzgerald, Executive Director
Ontario Livestock & Poultry Council

Over the years, the Ontario Livestock and Poultry Council (OLPC) has developed several biosecurity resources including signs, manuals, posters, videos, and more. Electronic versions of the print material are available on the website at ontlpc.com/resources and the videos can be viewed at ontlpc.com/videos.

OLPC still has a few biosecurity stop signs in stock. They can be ordered by downloading an order form from ontlpc.com/resources, calling the office at 519-787-4322, or emailing Susan Fitzgerald at susan.tfio@bell.net. The stop signs are \$20.00 + HST per sign.

OLPC also has biosecurity videos on DVD. The videos work well for training non-agricultural staff and for 4-H or school groups. There is no charge for the videos. Contact the OLPC office to request a copy. 🐮

Calf Care Corner



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We have an issue... If you're not telling your story, someone else is

Jessica McCann, Communications Coordinator

Farm & Food Care Ontario



Do I have you hooked yet? If not, think about this: someone, somewhere, is forming an opinion about how veal is raised right now, and if we are not part of that story, someone else is telling it for us.

We need more farmers sharing their stories online, and it can be simpler than you think. Social media personality Tyler Heppell, known online as "Potato Ty," a BC potato and vegetable grower and President of Heppell's Potato Corp., shared that the key to his success comes down to a couple of things: continuing to show up and making sure you have people hooked.

Farming comes with stories we tell every day, whether we realize it or not. We share our wins and our challenges because we want people to understand how and why we farm. Most of us have found ourselves explaining what drives us, even when it means early mornings, battling the elements, and long hours making sure cattle are well-fed, gaining properly, and staying healthy.

Those everyday conversations at the dinner table with friends, at the rink, or in the grocery store often come back to the same message: we do it because of our passion for farming, for the crops we grow and the livestock we raise, and for the way of life that comes with it. These stories and conversations grow public trust, deepen awareness, influence policy, and support the market for Canadian veal. At the end of the day, if people do not know us, why would they trust us?

Taking those stories online can feel intimidating. Tyler spoke at the Farm

& Food Care Ontario Annual Speakers' Conference earlier this year, about how he accidentally found success online and how he now shares his farm story with purpose.

Before returning to the farm, Tyler was working in corporate sales. He enjoyed it but wanted a greater sense of purpose. When his dad asked him if he would consider coming back, he made a list of pros and cons. Farming, as we all know, comes with plenty of cons. He realized the right choice isn't always the easy one. He knew he could make a difference by returning to the farm, especially as their land faces increasing pressure from urban expansion and development.

Tyler started sharing about the importance of preserving farmland and the behind-the-scenes of their family farm. He rapidly achieved success, amassing more than 1.5 million followers across Instagram and TikTok. His lessons apply just as much to veal farmers as they do to potato growers.

First, meet people where they are. Younger generations are spending hours (up to six to nine) per day online. To reach these audiences, we need farmers to show up on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and YouTube.

Second, just start. Tyler says he really believes that engaging with people online shouldn't be complicated. That said, if you're not trying, you'll never succeed. The idea of getting in front of a camera and sharing your story can feel "cringy," but anyone who has had success online has also had to climb the cringe mountain and just get over it.

Third, stay consistent. Success rarely happens overnight. As farmers, we understand that growth takes time, patience, and steady effort, you have to put in the work to see results. The same applies here. Tyler recommends setting aside time each week to plan your content. Jot down ideas, think about what you want to capture, and approach it with intention. A bit of planning goes a long way in making the process manageable. He also suggests using voice-overs to get more value out of your footage and bring your story to life.

Finally, it all comes back to the hook. Attention spans are short, and still shrinking. If you don't capture interest in the first few seconds, people will scroll right past. Start with something that pulls them in, then bring it back to your message, whether you're showing how you raise cattle,

explaining the practices you use, or giving a real look at a day on your farm.

There are also real, tangible benefits to sharing your story online. Tyler has been able to supplement his farm income through his online endeavours. There is significant potential for brand partnerships and advertising for their farm business. By sharing the story of Heppell's Potatoes, they have launched a new seed potato line that is already seeing strong pre-orders. Beyond business, his work has helped him give back. His "Ugly Potato Day" has welcomed more than 20,000 people and donated nearly half a million pounds of food back into his community, with plans to expand across Canada.

Tyler warned people that he did not see success overnight. It took trial and error, persistence, and a willingness to adapt. But through it, he found purpose, built a community, and created new opportunities for his farm.

And that brings us back to the hook. The veal industry has a powerful story to tell, but it only matters if it's being shared. If you're not telling your story, someone else will – so who do you want telling it? 🐷

To learn more

To learn more about FFCO's initiatives, visit FarmFoodCareON.org and subscribe to the monthly e-newsletter. Comments and questions can always be directed to FFCO staff at info@farmfoodcare.org.

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VEAL Farmers of Ontario

VFO needs your help to provide key communications to our members.



VFO doesn't receive your email address when licence fees are remitted, and signing up for our email communications service is a great way to stay informed about the veal industry.

Scan the QR code and sign-up to have the weekly e-newsletter delivered straight to your inbox, along with other important and timely notifications.



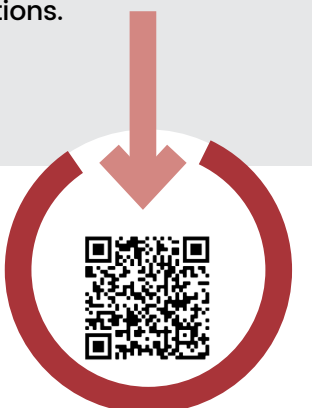
Ensures fast and efficient delivery of important information



Saves on increasing costs of postage



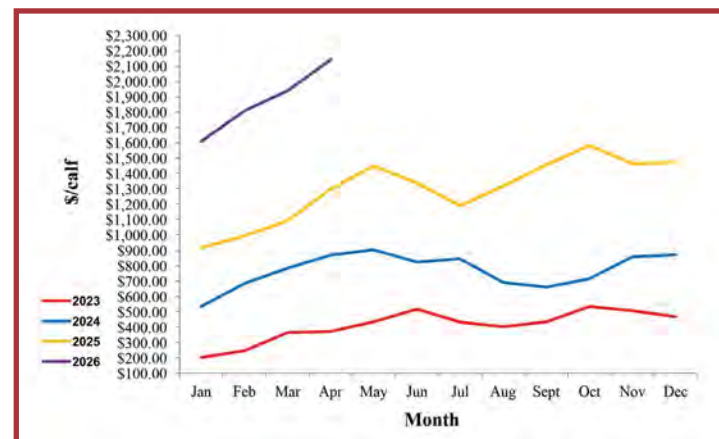
Helps you stay in the know about your industry



VEAL MARKET INFORMATION

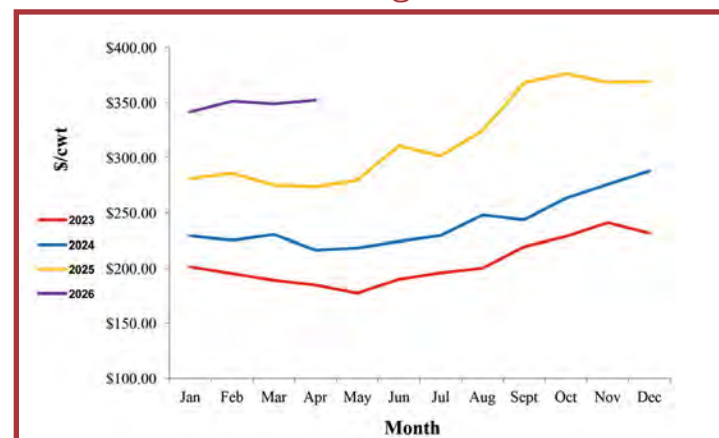
This information is collected from various sources and disseminated by Veal Farmers of Ontario.

Bob Calf Pricing



This price range is collected and tabulated from participating sale barns throughout Ontario based on average pricing. This information is used to follow trends.

Sale Barn Veal Pricing



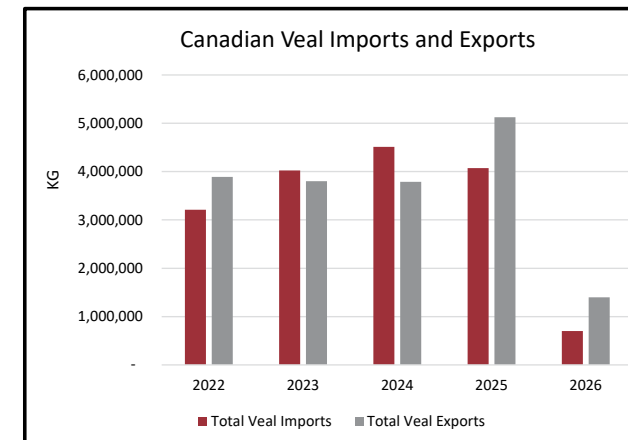
This price range is collected and tabulated from participating sale barns throughout Ontario based on average pricing. This information is used to follow trends.



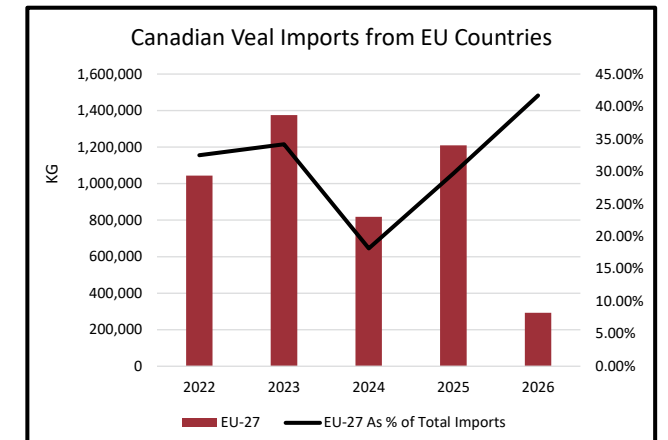
Veal Trade Tracker

31-Mar-26

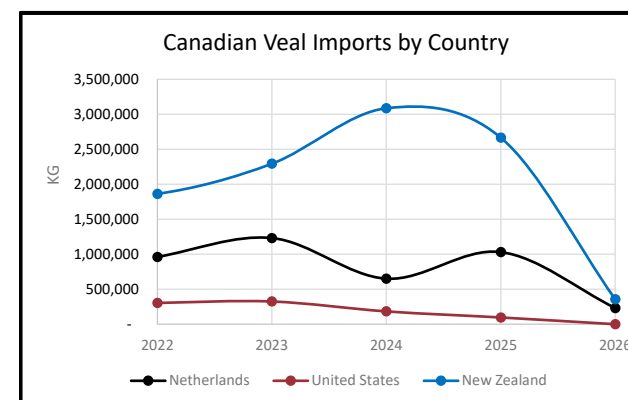
A quarterly snapshot of Canada's veal trade



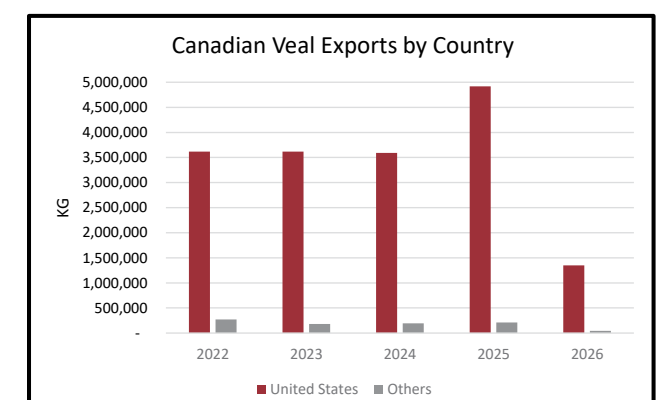
Throughout 2025 veal exports significantly exceed imports. Compared with this time last year, import volumes have risen by 50%, while exports rose at a slower pace, increasing by 6%.



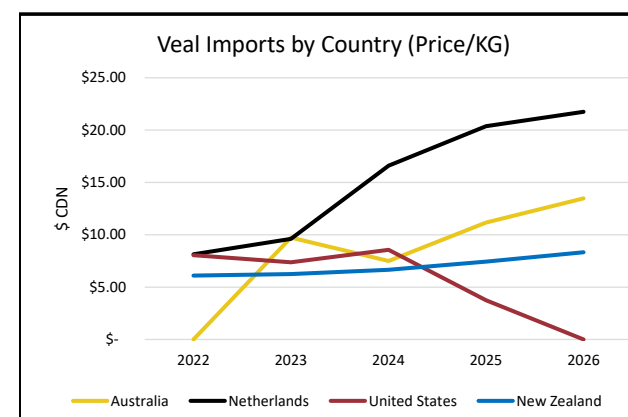
Veal imports from the EU represented 30% of Canada's total veal imports (black line) in 2025. Thus far in 2026, the share of Canadian veal imports from the EU (Netherlands and Italy) is 42%.



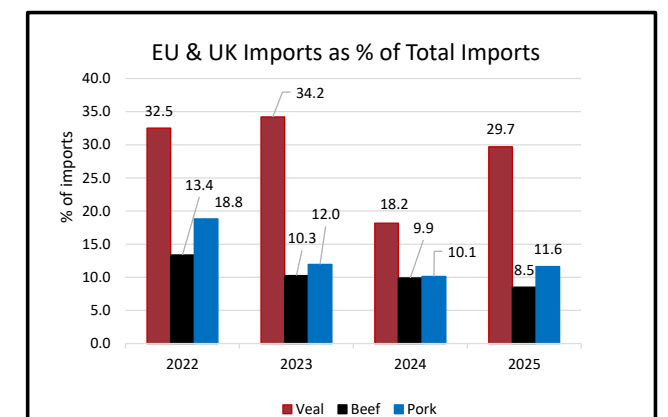
In the first quarter of 2026, New Zealand has remained the largest source of veal imports into Canada, followed by the Netherlands, Italy, and Australia. Thus far in 2026 no veal has been imported from the United States.



2025 has the strongest level of veal exports to the USA in the past decade. There is also a slight increase in exports to the Middle East.



The per kilogram price of veal imported from the Netherlands has risen again in 2026 and remains notably higher than other countries. While the value of New Zealand imports has held relatively steady.



When compared to beef and pork, the share of veal being imported into Canada from the EU and UK is consistently and significantly higher.

Data retrieved from AAFC and Statistics Canada, red meat section.

FEATURED VEAL RECIPE

Ontario VEAL appeal

Grilled Veal Rib Chops with Chimichurri

Cut: Chops/Steaks | Servings: 4

Chimichurri is an Argentinean sauce made with fresh herbs (parsley, oregano and cilantro), chilies, garlic, and vinegar. It is full of flavour and is an excellent sauce for Ontario grain-fed veal chops.

Ingredients:

Ontario Veal Rib Chops, approximately 8 oz each and 1 inch thick
¼ cup steak spice
Drizzle olive oil

Chimichurri Sauce

Note: This sauce is often found in the condiment or international food aisle at your favourite grocery store.

1 cup flat-leaf parsley chopped
½ cup fresh oregano chopped
¼ cup fresh cilantro chopped
2 green onions, chopped
8 cloves garlic minced
¼ cup malt or red wine vinegar
¼ cup olive oil
1 tbsp cracked black pepper
1 tsp red chili flake
1 tsp ground cumin
Kosher salt to taste
4 tbsp creamy blue cheese (or substitute feta cheese)

Instructions:

In a bowl combine parsley, oregano, cilantro, green onion, garlic, and vinegar. Blend until smooth. With the motor running on the blender drizzle in the olive oil in a steady stream to incorporate. Add black pepper, chili flake and cumin and season to taste with a little kosher salt.

Set aside.

Lightly brush the veal rib chops with olive oil and rub the chops with the steak spice, pressing the seasoning into the meat.

Fire up your grill to medium high to high 500-650°F (260-345°C).

Grill veal rib chops for 3 to 5 minutes per side for medium rare doneness (135°F/57 °C), basting with a little chimichurri sauce after the flip.

Top with a tablespoon of crumbled creamy blue cheese, close grill lid for 1 to 2 minutes to allow cheese to melt while the steaks finish cooking.

Remove chops from grill and let rest for 3 minutes. Serve drizzled with extra chimichurri sauce.

Source: Ted Reader BBQ



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✉ info@vealfarmers.ca

Licenced dealers

As a veal (bob calves, started/preconditioned calves, and finished veal cattle) producer, you should be dealing with licenced dealers who are remitting veal licence fees/check-off on behalf of the farmers they are collecting from. If you are selling bob calves from your dairy farm, the licence fee/check-off is to be collected and remitted by the person purchasing those calves. If you sell your calves to a sales barn, the licence fees/check-off is remitted on your behalf. Please contact the Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) office to ensure we have your updated contact information, including your email address. If you are dealing with an unlicensed dealer, you are not protected under the Ontario Beef Cattle Financial Protection Program (OBCFPP). You could be in jeopardy of losing the money from the sale, especially if you received a cheque for payment. If it is unclear if the dealer is licenced, ask to see the licence, check the Agricorn website at agricorp.com or contact the VFO office.

2026 VFO licence fee remittances

Ontario Regulation 58/15 Veal Cattle Marketing requires any person who receives veal cattle to deduct from the money payable for the veal cattle any licence fees payable to the local board by the person from whom the veal cattle is received and to forward the licence fees to the local board. Bob calves and preconditioned calves are considered veal cattle. This regulation also includes veal cattle that are sent for custom slaughter.

If you are purchasing male dairy and dairy crossbreed bob calves (up to 150 lbs.) and preconditioned intact male dairy and dairy crossbreed calves (up to 450 lbs.) licence fees are required.

If veal cattle are purchased from a sale barn this does not apply.

Licence fee remittances are due on the 15th of the following month.

Forms 4 and 5 are available on vealfarmers.ca or contact the VFO office to have copies mailed.

Ontario Beef Cattle Financial Protection Program

Agricorn is the Delivery Agent of the OBCFPP and Administrator for the Livestock Financial Protection Board. All communication, including but not limited to: Late Payments Reports, Claims to the Fund, and Licencing inquiries, must be directed to Agricorn. Visit agricorp.com or call 1-888-247-4999 for more information. 🐮

Coordinates and Staff

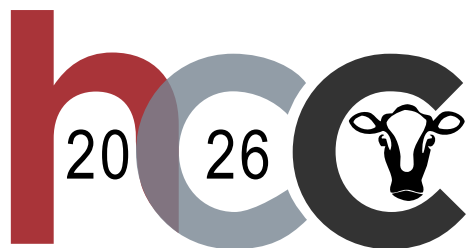
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