



Manure Tags

Why They're a Problem & What To Do About It

As veal producers, we've all seen those calves covered in manure tags. What's the problem? Why can't veal cattle be shipped covered in manure? Shipping finished cattle covered in manure tags is a food safety concern. Manure that is embedded in the calf's hair can contaminate the meat at slaughter with harmful pathogens like *Escherichia Coli* (E.

Coli) 0157:H7, which causes people who consume contaminated food to become very sick. This bug can live in the intestines of healthy cattle, so you may not have any indication that this pathogen lives on your farm.

As a rule of thumb, the VVP recommends that 75 per cent of calves on-farm have no more than 30 per cent of their abdomen covered in manure. To help keep calves sufficiently clean at all times, including their flanks and legs, there are a few things you can do:

1. Keep calves bedded.
2. Avoid overcrowding.
3. Clip calves with long hair.

Other factors to consider include diet, housing, overall calf health and weather conditions. It's important to adjust your bedding needs accordingly to prevent calves from lying in manure.

The VVP recommends that producers evaluate the calves' cleanliness at shipping and note it in the Outgoing Veal Record, which lists the animals being shipped, along with any notes about the cattle such as broken needles. It also verifies that the withdrawal periods for medications and vaccines have been met, providing a little reminder to check the withdrawal dates before shipping to ensure the finished cattle you are marketing are safe.