

A Producer Perspective on Verified Veal

The Verified Veal Program (VVP) is the Canadian on farm food safety program for veal producers. The program is designed to address consumer demand for a high quality safe product. In Ontario, participation in the VVP is optional, but it is mandatory in Quebec.

The program is simple and easy to follow and contains a set of protocols including detailed records. At the end of a three month period of record keeping, a full audit is scheduled that involves a review of records and a tour of the farm. Once the audit has been successfully completed the producer is enrolled in the program they begin a seven year audit cycle that includes full audits, record assessments, and self-declarations.

Veal Farmers of Ontario has recently enrolled a new producer on the VVP, and they agreed to share their experience.

1. Why did you decide to enroll in the Verified Veal Program?

The VVP allows producers to guarantee that we are delivering the consumer the highest quality product. VVP is a tool to help our operation function professionally using mandatory operating procedures.

2. What do you hope to achieve for your farm by participating in VVP?

By participating in the VVP we hope to open up new marketing opportunities. Marketing our veal as Verified Veal will allow the meat processor to pass on the trust in our product to the consumer. This may increase the demand for veal products at the retail level. More demand may allow us to receive a premium when marketing our cattle.

3. What challenges did you face when getting your farm records ready?

A challenge we had to overcome when becoming a verified was, ensuring all our team members understood what, and when information needed to be recorded. As part of the program we needed to keep our records organized and up to date.

4. Did you have to make changes to your farm management and record keeping before the audit?

We had to make a few minor changes. We chose to change our record keeping system from paper tracking to entering it electronically. We now track our information on a spreadsheet and this information is updated to the system daily.

5. What was the audit process like?

a. What was the easiest part?

The audit itself went very smoothly and took only a couple hours.

b. What was the hardest part?

The most difficult part when preparing for the audit was developing the suggested and mandatory protocols but the VVP manual provided templates to help get set up.

6. Were there any changes you needed to make based on the results from the audit?

There were no major changes we had to complete, just a few minor things regarding our protocols and the frequency they were completed.

7. What was the cost to enroll?

The cost to complete the audit was \$500.

8. What advice do you have for other veal producers interested in enrolling in this program?

It is important as an industry to show the consumer that we are providing the highest quality product possible. I would recommend to any veal producer considering the VVP to take the initiative to complete it. Marketing is becoming a crucial aspect of the cattle industry. The VVP is a great resource for veal producers to show their potential buyers their professionalism and passion for creating the best product possible.

The VVP is an easy to use program that outlines a set of protocols to follow on farm to help ensure food safety. Many of these protocols are already being followed on Ontario veal farms. We know our veal is safe, but we should be able to prove it, which is why record keeping is at the heart of the program. Records do not need to be electronically recorded, they can be hand written, and examples of tables and record sheets are included in the program manual. For more information or to enroll in VVP please contact the VFO office at 519-824-2942.