



Housing and hutches, changes for 2021

A new requirement of the 2017 *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Veal Cattle* (the Code) is now in effect for calves being started for the veal or dairy-beef markets.

Effective December 31, 2020, calves in hutches and outdoor enclosures must not be tethered and calves in hutches must be able to access an area outside the hutch.

This requirement means that adding a bar across the front to keep the calf in the hutch does not meet the full requirement, which states that calves must be able to access an area outside of the hutch.

Access outside the hutch was included in the updated Code because calves are social animals and need visual contact with other calves. Providing an area outside the hutch gives the calves the ability to come out of the hutch to look around at other calves. Just popping their head out and hoping their neighbour is doing the same is not sufficient to meet the need for visual contact.

To help visualize the area outside of the hutch, measure an eight-week-old calf from nose to tail, and add a few inches to allow for a calf of that size to step outside of the hutch and turn around, clearing all sides of the pen. To err on the side of caution, measure a bigger eight-week-old calf.

Retailers are asking for veal that has not been tethered because their customers are asking for it. At the end of the day, we all are in the business of sales and supplying what customers want. This new requirement follows similar consumer demands for group-housed veal in recent years, and it is our responsibility to meet the targets and guidelines in the Code to ensure access to this market.

In addition to no longer using tethers, producers must also meet the following requirements:

Calves in hutches and outdoor enclosures must be able to easily stand up and lie down, turn completely around without assistance, groom, adopt sternal and lateral resting postures, and have physical or visual contact with other cattle.

As of July 1, 2018, calves must be grouped as young as possible and no later than eight weeks of age.

This means calves in hutches and outdoor enclosures must be able to stand fully upright without touching the top of the enclosure and adopt both sternal (resting upright on the chest with legs tucked under the body) and lateral (a resting position in which an animal lies on either side of the body with legs extended) resting postures. Find the full Code document at <https://bit.ly/vealcode>.

The Code is our industry standard and is in effect for all of Canada. Veal Farmers of Ontario does not have the authority to mandate the Code, however, in Ontario if the Provincial Animal Welfare Services (PAWS) is called to investigate your operation, the standard will be the requirements in the Code. On January 1, 2020, the PAWS Act replaced the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) Act and all investigations are done with Provincial welfare inspectors.