

Introduction

The goal of a grain-fed veal farmer is to achieve the desired finish on veal cattle at the right weight and age. Ideally, market-ready grain-fed veal cattle should weigh between 295 to 320 kg (650 to 705 lbs.) at 28 to 32 weeks (seven to eight months) of age. To achieve this goal, it is critical to have the right feed rations and ratios.

Veal is defined as cattle of any dairy breed or dairy crossbreed dressing no more than 190 kg (419 lbs.). This converts to a live weight of roughly 349 kg (769 lbs.), which is reached at approximately eight months of age. Producers are strongly encouraged to target a dress weight of 180 kg (397 lbs.) to maintain some flexibility within the system to manage veal carcass weights.

- Average daily gain (ADG) should be 1.2 kg (2.6 lbs.) or better. Targeting daily gains above 1.5 kg (3.3 lbs.) may require additional nutrient requirements.

Grain-fed veal cattle are fed a balanced ration based of grain (usually clean, whole-shelled corn) and pellets made of protein, vitamins, and minerals. A small amount of fibre should be offered daily to maintain rumen health. Cattle should also have continuous access to their feed, to encourage slower eating and stimulate chewing. Ensure there is adequate bunk space for each animal.

Pellet points

There are important management practices to remember when handling protein supplement (or concentrate, the two terms are interchangeable) pellets. Pellets are processed to have a hard surface, so they do not break down and create fines. Fines could include important minerals that the animals need and can cause [acidosis](#). Even with a hardener added to the pellet, the ends are soft and fragile; excessive handling (auguring, mixing, and distribution) and surrounding moisture can contribute to pellet damage.

An area to pay attention to is *moisture migration* from the corn to the pellet. Moisture from corn at 15 per cent will travel to the pellet, which may be at five per cent. This may result, over time, in softened pellets which will produce fines.

There are many ways to mix, distribute, and store prepared feed on the farm. It is not recommended to make feed too far in advance because of the moisture in the corn. Ideally, a mixed ration should be prepared and fed daily so that feed quality is at its highest. The corn and supplement should be evenly distributed throughout the ration for a consistent feed. This will help with pen uniformity of the cattle.

It is equally important to ensure that the supplement being fed is good quality, with an optimal nutrient supply. Additional pellet options include urea and/or additional fat.

As an added precaution, check your supplement storage bins for potential water leakage. Protection from the elements is very important to maintain the quality of your feed and prevent mold growth.

Feeding veal cattle

Depending on the management program, by the time cattle go to market, each animal will have consumed approximately 750 kg (1653 lbs.) of corn, 230 kg (507 lbs.) of supplement, 20 kg (41 lbs.) of roughage, 35 kg (77 lbs.) of milk replacer, and 25 kg (55 lbs.) of calf starter. Feed is not only the most expensive input it is the foundation to good quality finished grain-fed veal.

To calculate cost of production visit <http://bit.ly/VFO-vealCOP>

For more information:

As part of your research into starting a grain-fed veal farm, you are encouraged to talk to experienced veal producers, visit their farms (while following strict biosecurity protocols), and attend industry events and meetings. No two veal farms are the same and a lot of valuable information will be learned from each visit and event.

Find producer resources on the VFO website here: <https://bit.ly/VFOProdResources>

Find the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Veal Cattle* here: <http://bit.ly/theVealCode>

Find OMAFRA veal resources here: <https://bit.ly/OMAFRAVealBusiness>

References available upon request.

Veal Farmers of Ontario

449 Laird Road, Unit 12, Guelph, Ontario N1G 4W1

Tel: 519-824-2942

Fax: 519-824-2534

E-mail: info@vealfarmers.ca

Find us online:

www.vealfarmers.ca

www.calfcare.ca

Find us on social:

Twitter: [@OntarioVeal](https://twitter.com/OntarioVeal)

[@CalfCareCorner](https://twitter.com/CalfCareCorner)

Facebook: [@CalfCareCorner](https://facebook.com/CalfCareCorner)

[@Finishing grain-fed veal in Ontario](https://facebook.com/FinishingGrainFedVeal)

[@Marketing of male dairy calves in Ontario](https://facebook.com/MarketingOfMaleDairyCalves)

YouTube: [Calf Care Corner](https://youtube.com/CalfCareCorner)

[OntarioVeal](https://youtube.com/OntarioVeal)

Disclaimer: This resource is for educational purposes only. Veal Farmers of Ontario is not responsible for any business or management decisions made by consulting this resource.

Revised: May 2021