

THE Connection

Spring 2019, Volume 1, No. 1

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VEAL 
Farmers
of Ontario



Happy New Year and making connections!

By Jennifer Haley, Executive Director

We all know that January is the traditional New Year, and for some September is seen as the start of a new year with the kids going back to school. But for all of us at the Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO), April has also become the start of a new year!

April is the start of the new VFO year because we now have our Annual General Meeting (AGM) completed, our financial audit wrapped up and the new Board and elected Executive gets back down to business. As an organization, our fiscal year end is December 31st and our work continues all twelve months of the year, that is for sure. But with April, comes a new board calendar year, sometimes some new board members around the table and a renewed focus on the priorities ahead for our industry and organization. Almost like making New Year's resolutions, but actually sticking with them!

And with a new year comes a fresh, new look with our member communications. Introducing "The Connection" magazine! With the Livestock Alliance now officially wrapped up, we wanted to find a new name for our member communications that symbolized the work we do for specifically for the veal cattle and dairy calf sectors.

Our industry is all about making connections. Making connections between the dairy and veal farmers; veal farmers and processors; farmers and consumers, and farmers and government. Making connections between the organization and our members; making connections with what the research says and the reality you see on your farm. You name it and the VFO is trying to make connections!

With the start of our 'New Year', we have an ambitious consumer marketing program set out

for 2019 that will see the VFO continue to build and grow the very popular search for *Ontario's Best Veal Sandwich* with the finale of competition taking place in early June. We will also be expanding our Culinary Education Program and visiting more culinary colleges to talk about Ontario veal with aspiring chefs. We are also planning some new and interesting veal retail promotions all to raise the level of awareness for Ontario veal and create demand for our great veal product.

The VFO will also be supporting and investing in several key projects and research with the overall goal of improving dairy calf health. Improving the health status of the dairy calves reduces mortality and cost of production, increases yields and produces a better-quality product. VFO will also continue to collaborate with our industry partners and government on important issues like the Risk Management Program and ensuring business risk management tools are available for veal cattle producers.

With this issue of the magazine, we are so very proud to include a copy of the VFO's 2018 Annual Report which was presented at our recent AGM. Please take some time to review the many issues and initiatives VFO has worked on and has strived to make connections that will benefit all our members. Our Annual Report is a testament to the hard work, dedication and passionate commitment our Board of Directors, staff and industry partners continue to show for our organization.

So Happy New Year everyone! Here is to a great year ahead! ■

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Managing Editor: Jennifer Bullock

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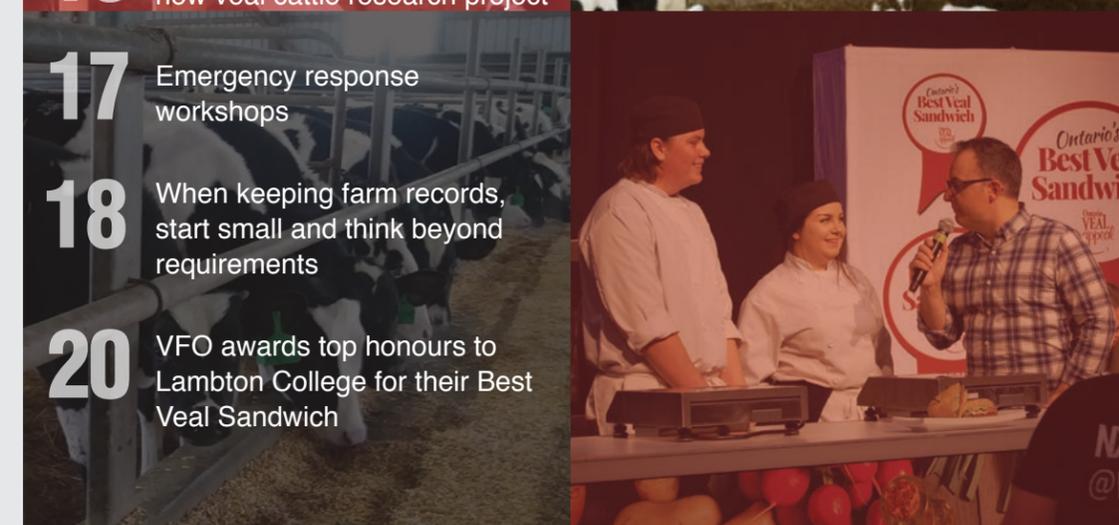
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Chair's MESSAGE

Creating return on investment with VFO licence fee increase



Tom Kroesbergen

As you may have heard, the delegates to the Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO) Annual General Meeting (AGM) voted overwhelming in favour of increasing the cattle check-off from \$4.00/head to \$5.50/head. At our recent Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) AGM, I announced that the VFO Board of Directors will also mirror this decision in order to avoid confusion within our very integrated marketplace.

I was really pleased to hear the support from our members about this planned increase and what it can do for our organization and the many initiatives we undertake. I appreciated hearing the feedback from members that VFO continues to work hard to demonstrate value and I respect the trust that members have in our Board and staff.

Whether from the past when we were the Ontario Veal Association, or now as the VFO, our boards have always expressed a commitment to making sure check-off/licence fees remain market neutral between beef and veal cattle. At the same time, we are committed to working with our industry partners to implement these changes in an integrated and transparent process.

The VFO Board of Directors will be looking at our finances very closely to evaluate what this increase will mean for our budget and how best to allocate this funding to the priority areas that will have the most benefit and return on investment.

It is important to understand that both BFO and VFO have different processes and governance requirements in order to change the check-off/licence fees. Because VFO is a marketing board under the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission (OFPMC), the VFO Board has

the ability to raise or lower its licence fees without having any general membership vote or constitutional amendments.

The BFO is now working with the government to make the necessary changes to the Beef Cattle Marketing Act, which is completely separate from the VFO's veal regulations. We anticipate that these changes will be made for a late Fall 2019 implementation date but once we know more we will be sure to let you and all our industry partners know. We will work simultaneously with BFO in our communications out to industry so that these changes can be seamlessly implemented.

I would like to thank our retiring director Jim Millson for his time spent with the VFO Board of Directors. Jim was initially appointed to our board by the OFPMC and then was re-elected by our industry to serve a total of four years on the board. Jim brought a wealth of previous board governance experience to the VFO and we really appreciate all of his contributions and wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

Congratulations also go to Cameron Knip on his recent election to the VFO Board of Directors. We are looking forward to having Cam's input around the board table and I know Cam is keen to contribute. Cam has already been an active participant in a number of VFO initiatives including our Cost of Production focus group and a panel member at our AGM. Welcome Cam!

Hope everyone is able to get out on the land soon, as I know I am itching to get into the tractor, and that your spring planting is completed without too much stress from Mother Nature! ■



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Annual General Meeting HIGHLIGHTS

The Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) was pleased to welcome over 80 attendees to our fourth Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Producer Education Day at the Arden Park Hotel in Stratford on Wednesday, March 6. The day included highlights of the past year at VFO and provided an opportunity for industry leaders to share ways to move the sector forward as we continue to address ongoing and emerging issues impacting veal and dairy calf production.



Marvin Kroesbergen, Cameron Knip and Tom Oudshoorn shared their perspectives and take-home tips during the producer panel discussion.

Justin and Keirstin Ulch, Perth County veal producers.



Larry Witzel, President, Ontario Livestock Exchange, helped producers navigate the veal market at Ontario livestock auctions.



VFO Vice-Chair Pascal Bouilly, and VFO Director Brian Keunen enjoy lunch with MPP Randy Pettapiece and his aide.

Thank you to our attendees, speakers, sponsors, staff and Board of Directors – everyone had a vital role in making the 2019 AGM & Producer Education Day a great success!



Bruce McKeown interacts with the panel.

Former Ontario Veal Association President Ian Foster and his wife Connie.



VFO Director Joyce Feenstra with Megan Van Schaik, Beef Cattle Specialist, OMAFRA, helped farmers learn more about common causes of carcass condemnations at provincial abattoirs.

Attendees were given the opportunity to meet with trade show exhibitors throughout the day.



Jennifer Haley, Laurie Nicol, Tom Kroesbergen.

VFO Board of Directors' Award Winner

Recognizing dedication and service to the veal cattle industry

The VFO Board of Director's Award is presented to individuals or groups who have helped the VFO Board achieve its mandate. This year, Ms. Laurie Nicol was recognized for her dedication and service to the veal cattle industry over her 33-year career at the Ontario Independent Meat Processors (OIMP).

"We have truly appreciated working with Laurie on many projects to advance the veal industry over the years, including the successful Homegrown Ontario program," says Jennifer Haley, Executive Director, VFO.

Nicol has been instrumental in dealing with several challenges and political issues that directly impacted veal production. Her commitment to ensuring our industry thrives and continuously improves is second to none.

"We thank Laurie for all that she has done for the veal sector and look forward to her continued support in her new appointment on the Ontario Beef Cattle Financial Protection Board," says Tom Kroesbergen, Chair, VFO. ■



Retiring VFO Director Jim Millson accepts a token of appreciation from VFO Director Phil Kroesbergen.



Perth-Wellington MPP Randy Pettapiece brought greetings on behalf of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA).



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Producer PROFILE



Jayne Dietrich
Character Dairy Genetics



Laura Schuurman
Joe Loewith & Sons Ltd.



Aaron Keunen
Mapleview Agri Ltd.

Be the **CEO** of your calves

The first ever calf care panel addressed the nearly 550 people in attendance at the Healthy Calf Conference, sharing their best tips for raising healthy calves. The three panelists each shared a brief overview of their operations and then fielded questions from the extremely engaged audience.

For the first time, **Jayne Dietrich**, owner of Character Dairy Genetics, shared how her operation raises the next generation of elite dairy genetics. The farm has raised over 3,500 calves since 2015, averaging 80 to 100 calvings per month. Mortality is less than one per cent and average daily gain (ADG) is 1.29 kilograms per day (kg/d) in the first 120 days.

Dietrich noted that in the swine and poultry industries, biosecurity is taken extremely seriously. She wondered aloud why the dairy industry pays less attention to this essential aspect of calf raising, and then explained that her farm has the stringent biosecurity procedures you would find on a hog farm, including equipment and employees that do not move between buildings, and a complete change of boots and coveralls when entering each calf barn. She emphasized the importance of sanitation, not just cleaning, reminding the audience that “Clean looks clean, but there can still be a lot of bacteria.”

Speaking about her standard operating procedures (SOPs), she provides the following advice:

1. Make it easy, set up for success

- Designing protocols that are customized to your farm makes them practical. Dietrich

has employees carry a thermometer at all times. This allows the instant ability to take a temperature when needed and doesn't require anyone to find a thermometer or remember to come back and take a temperature later.

2. Keep it simple and safe

- SOPs must be easy to follow and help ensure all calves are given the same standard of excellent care. Having different procedures for different animals is too confusing.
- Calves receive winter formula milk replacer year-round. When there are only four warm months, and even those months have cool nights, changing milk replacer to a summer formula becomes less beneficial. That time can be spent on other calf care routines.

3. Be intentional

- Set your calf care goals and take specific strategies to help you reach them.

Some other tips she offered included using a shallow, stainless steel bowl to make calf starter more appealing, using cardboard as temporary hutch doors in the winter, using translucent and brightly coloured feed pails, and buying a used restaurant dishwasher to sanitize nearly everything in the calf barn—from bottles to halters.

Laura Schuurman is the primary calf manager for the approximately 500 calves born each year at Joe Loewith & Sons Ltd. The 450 milking cow operation consistently receives a high DHI Herd Management Score. From September 2016 to September 2018, mortality was less than one per cent and no calves died from infectious disease. The rate of sickness was about one in 15.

Calves are born on a straw/sawdust bedded pack, given three litres of colostrum within the first two hours of birth, and three more before 12 hours. All calves have their navel dipped in chlorhexidine and receive a selenium injection. Calves then receive transition milk from their dam for two feedings.

Calves live in outdoor hutches for nine weeks. Temperature in the hutches is managed by lifting the back of the hutch for summer airflow and using straw bedding, and putting coats on all calves when the temperature is less than 10°C.

Step down weaning along with free choice water, starter, and chopped straw provide calves the nutrition they need to thrive. Calves are disbudded with a nerve block, pain medication,

and sedation. Calves are vaccinated two weeks after disbudding, spreading out these stressful management practices.

In 2016, average daily gain was 880 grams per day. At each milk feeding, calves are assessed for attitude, overall appearance, and milk consumption. The simple sick calf protocol describes symptoms of a sick calf and helps everyone working with the calves to assess calf health and implement appropriate interventions to prevent calves from becoming worse. Sick calf care includes a pain injection to help calves feel better and encouraging them to get up and drink milk, as well as rest comfortably, which is essential for recovery.

Aaron Keunen manages a 3,000 head veal and dairy-beef operation with a strong focus on young animal production, benchmarking,

cost of production, and protocol development and implementation. As Keunen manages a veal facility, the usual challenges of young calf rearing are amplified. Transportation stress and comingling calves from different farms with unknown history create an ideal situation for pathogens to take hold.

Calves are regularly weighed to determine ADG as well as health scored daily to identify any scours or respiratory disease. Based on these regular assessments, the team can determine if current protocols are working well or need to be tweaked to better meet the needs of the current group of calves.

When calves arrive to the facility, some of the common challenges are failure of passive transfer, infected navels, and introducing pathogens from the dairy farm to the veal facility. These challenges are managed by assessing

calves on arrival and providing electrolytes, pain management, and antibiotic treatment as needed. Housing is always disinfected and left empty for a week between groups. Additional strategies to promote calf health and growth include a strong vaccination program, testing to identify which pathogen is causing health challenges, and susceptibility tests to determine the right drug for the bug.

The overall message from the panel is that approaching zero mortality is not impossible. There are some challenges that every farm experiences and others that are more unique to your operation, but no challenge is too big to tackle. Understanding your specific farm's strengths and weaknesses allows you to develop protocols that ensure calves on your farm are thriving. ■

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Ask
the Expert

Management tips for spring calf rearing

Rachel Genore-Roche, RVT

Dave Renaud, DVM, ACER Consulting Ltd.

With spring on the way it's time to start thinking about how to adapt your management practices to prepare for cold, wet weather, and the toll it takes on calves and their developing immune systems. Take stock of your current feeding, housing and calf cleanliness routines to ensure your calves will continue to grow without having to compensate for weather changes. Here are some of the keys to consider.

Changes in weather requires changes to calf feeding

For the first few months of spring, temperatures can still be quite cold. Calves need to eat more during the colder months to stay warm and maintain growth, so it's critical to continue until outside temperatures are consistently warmer. Calves fed at a higher plane of nutrition have increased capacity to fight disease, and are less affected by the stress of cold weather. Calves less than three weeks old will still benefit from an increased amount of milk or milk replacer until outside temperatures stay above 15°C. Older calves will benefit from an increased allowance of milk in early spring until outside temperatures stay above 5°C.

Nutrition isn't the only thing to consider when the weather is cold. Young calves have minimal body fat to help insulate them, and would benefit from some help keeping warm. Bedding helps keep heat near the calf's body, and when done properly, young calves should be able to nest with their legs covered when housed on straw packs. Calf jackets will be helpful for calves of this age, particularly overnight when temperatures drop to freezing and below.

Is your ventilation system ready?

Calves in hutches have the benefit of continuous fresh air, but ventilation presents a major challenge in the spring for calves housed indoors. With low temperatures at night and warmer temperatures during the day, curtain, chimney and fan settings can be challenging to manage. It is important to ensure that the ventilation system is providing sufficient fresh air to calves without draft.

This might be a good time to check that your mechanical ventilation system is in good working order (tubes hung properly, fully inflated, no frost or condensation build up, fans running). Regulating humidity inside barns will also help to reduce the survival of respiratory pathogens in the air. In addition to maintaining ventilation and humidity, stocking density could be considered as a way to reduce pathogen loads.

Does your bedding pass the kneel test?

As with any time of year, clean, dry bedding is important for calf health, but keeping bedding dry in the damp spring weather can

be especially challenging. This is compounded by the fact that bacteria thrive in warming temperatures. It's important to clean out pens and add fresh bedding before it becomes saturated with moisture, as it could lead to the production of harmful gases. These gases are a concern because they reduce the lung's defenses, and make calves more susceptible to respiratory disease. The 'kneel test' can be used to monitor how dry the calf bedding is. If you kneel in a pen, are your knees dry when you stand? You can also look at calves' knees - are they wet or stained? If you're having trouble maintaining dry pens, consider cleaning more frequently and reassess stocking densities.

As winter comes to a close, spring tasks starts to come into focus. Adding these items to your calf health checklist will help prepare you and your calves for the weeks and months to come. If managing disease on your farm is a challenge, or you have questions about how to manage your calves successfully during the spring months, speak to your veterinarian. They can work with you to tailor your management to ensure your calves reach optimum growth and performance. ■

VFO elects Executive for 2019

The Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) is pleased to announce the re-election of Middlesex County veal producer Tom Kroesbergen Jr. as Chair and Pascal Bouilly (Cambridge) as Vice-Chair, at a recent meeting of the Board of Directors.

Kroesbergen was appointed to the VFO Board of Directors in 2015 and has served as Chair since 2018. Kroesbergen, alongside his family, operates Sunnydale Acres near Ailsa Craig, which has been home to their grain-fed veal business for over 26 years. In addition, the family cash crops, and runs both a broiler operation and beef feedlot.

"Looking forward in 2019, I know we will have some challenges ahead with pricing and bringing veal cattle to market, but there will also be opportunities which we can harness both as producers and as an organization," says Kroesbergen. "Collecting licence fees from our members in order to continue to do the work we have set out to do in our strategic plan is both a privilege and a responsibility that we do not take lightly and one that we will not defer."

Bouilly, the Dairy Calf Supply Chain Manager with Grober Nutrition, will enter his fourth year on the Board and his second as Vice-Chair. Bouilly is responsible for the started dairy calves program and provides technical support for their sales team.

"As Vice-Chair, I look forward to continuing to address the issues directly impacting dairy calf and veal producers with my fellow directors," says Bouilly. "No other organization focuses on the dairy calf and finishing veal cattle the way we do, and we will strive to further strengthen our relationship with the dairy sector to reach our common calf care goals."

Along with Kroesbergen and Bouilly, Cameron Knip was acclaimed to the VFO Board at the 2019 Annual General Meeting and Producer Education Day in Stratford, on March 6. Knip raises veal cattle south of Exeter; he also has a finishing barn for market hogs and cash crops with his family.

Knip fills the seat of Jim Millson, a dairy and veal



Back row: Joyce Feenstra, Brian Keunen, Cameron Knip, Phil Kroesbergen, Judy Dirksen
Front row: Pascal Bouilly (Vice-Chair), Tom Kroesbergen (Chair), Rita Maciukiewicz

producer from Enniskillen, who has retired from the board following completion of his term.

"We thank Jim for his service and dedication to the Ontario veal industry and will miss his words of encouragement from around the board table," says Kroesbergen. "We look to Cameron to bring a fresh and business-focused perspective to our board discussions."

Returning to the eight member VFO Board of Directors are Judy Dirksen, Joyce Feenstra, Brian Keunen, Phil Kroesbergen and Rita Maciukiewicz. ■



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The butterfly effect

AND THE CATTLE MARKET



By: Kendra Keels

Industry Development Director

BUTTERFLY EFFECT IN THE CATTLE MARKET

Little causes having big effects in the Canadian dairy and veal industries

The butterfly effect, coined by American mathematician Edward Norton Lorenz, is the concept that small actions can put a series of larger effects in place. One simple action, such as a butterfly flapping its wings several weeks ago, could cause a tornado. The butterfly effect sounds far-fetched, but it's real and observable in nature—and a similar chain of cause and effect can be seen in the cattle market today.

Actions in the Chinese beef market have had a direct impact on the price of male dairy calves, commonly referred to as “bob calves”, in Ontario.

In 2015, prices of bob calves, veal and dairy-beef were strong—the strongest in years. Yet in 2019, prices have dropped and are now soft. What changed?

The answer is complicated and multifactorial, but at its core, the main reasons are supply and demand, and an oversupply of beef.

BEEF OVERSUPPLY

The decrease in American exports, particularly to China, has created a ripple effect dairy producers are experiencing in Ontario.

The United States planned to have a stronger export market in 2018 with the goal of increasing its exports from the year before to China, but that didn't happen.

Mid-year, China implemented tariffs on beef imports from the U.S. in retaliation to tariffs on Chinese exports into the U.S. This resulted in fewer American beef exports, creating an oversupply of beef in the U.S. and a decrease of Canadian beef imports, which caused an oversupply of beef in Canada.

This oversupply of beef has not only impacted the traditional beef market but caused a decline in veal and dairy-beef markets as well, leading to the drop in price of bob calves.

The primary markets for bob calves are veal and dairy-beef, so this oversupply affects everyone. Bob calves destined for the dairy-beef market are dehorned, castrated and raised to around 1,500 pounds compared with those raised for grain-fed veal, which are not dehorned or castrated, and raised to around 700 lb.

SUPPORTING CANADIAN VEAL

Another factor to consider in this complicated puzzle is the impact on the market of European veal imported into Canada.

Veal consumption in Canada is generally not high, staying steady at only 900 grams per person per year compared with beef at 24 kilograms per person per year in 2015, according to a survey by Alberta Agriculture and Forestry.

When the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and

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the European Union (EU) went into effect in September 2017, tariffs on red meat exported from the EU into Canada dropped substantially.

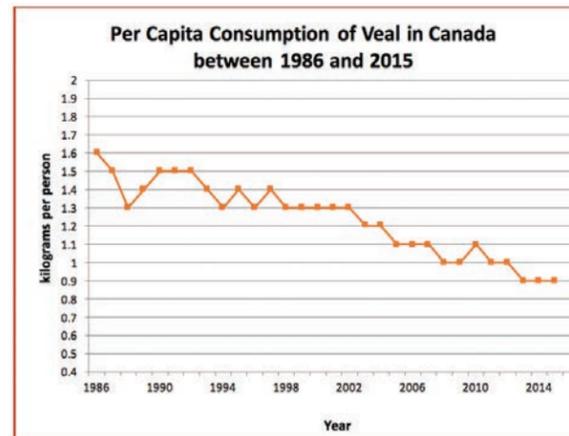
Europe is the global leader in veal production and a low-cost producer compared with Canada. While we are not importing much in the way of EU beef, in 2018, European veal imports increased by 156.1 per cent.

That hits very hard in a small market, such as the Canadian veal sector where Canadian consumption is already low, and now our Canadian veal farmers are forced to compete with European veal imports.

The Canadian dairy and veal industries are closely connected—they always have been—and we need each other. Together, as consumers, we need to keep the Canadian veal demand up in order to keep bob calf prices up. Simply buying and eating more Canadian veal will help keep the price of bob calves steady for dairy farmers.

REDUCING NO-SALE CALVES

Another reality of a market downturn is unsold bob calves, called “no-sale” calves at the sales barn. One possible solution is to keep questionable calves longer on the dairy farm. Bob calves that are a little small and plain are at risk of being no-sale calves in these tougher markets, so it's better to keep them longer on the farm until they have gained more weight.



It is tough sometimes when there is shortage of space in the calf barn, but it's better for calf welfare to find extra space for a couple of weeks and raise the calf to at least 120 lb before sending it off to the market. It will be bigger, stronger and more likely to sell.

There are many factors currently at work affecting bob calf pricing, such as beef and bob calf oversupply, and foreign imports into Canada. It was not a stellar year for beef sales in 2018, and 2019 is not shaping up to break any records. However, as we know in the livestock industry, there is a long history of ups and downs in the markets. Hopefully, we'll see the butterfly effect happen in favour of the dairy markets soon. ■



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Implanting veal **not** permitted

December 1, 2018 brought new regulation changes to purchasing antimicrobials that are important to human medicine. If products are needed on-farm, livestock producers must now work through their herd veterinarian to gain access with a prescription.

This new regulation change did pose challenges for some but as we are moving along post-December 1, it seems that producers are managing the change with minimal challenges. The hope is that increased veterinary oversight of these important products will help to reduce antimicrobial resistance, which is a scary human health risk.

There has been a lot of time and money invested in this regulation change to bring awareness to this issue. Perhaps this is a good time to review the use of implants in veal production.

Since **January 5, 2005**, Canadian veal producers have stopped the extra-label use of hormonal implants in veal cattle. The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) performed testing for hormonal growth promotants in veal cattle in 2004/2005 and again in 2011/2012.

Over this time there have been a few isolated cases in which implants were found through testing in veal cattle. The veal industry is proud of our track record and through monitoring, testing and surveillance, we hope to continue

our positive image of no added hormones in the veal sector.

Veal is defined after it is harvested and dresses less than 180 kg (396 lbs). Animals sold in the veal sales ring may not be suitable as veal at the processing plant because they may not dress less than 180 kg. Animals sold in the ring could be purchased live to go on for further finishing, similar to a backgrounder in the beef market or they could be purchased by a packer and harvested regardless of the live weight. If the weight is over 180 kg the meat could be sold as “ungraded beef”. It is against the law to market meat from a carcass greater than 180 kg as veal—it can only be sold as ungraded beef.

If a veal producer sends a male dairy animal to a known veal sale, it is very important those animals have not been implanted because it could end up in a veal plant for harvest. Be mindful of the intended purpose when marketing in the veal sales ring. The veal and dairy-beef sectors can be similar and the same farmer can be finishing for both depending on market

demand and the time of the year.

Dairy-beef cattle are started out similarly to veal. Both industries typically begin with a male dairy calf on milk and calf starter. If the calf is destined for the dairy-beef market it will then be dehorned and castrated early on and raised up to 680 kg (1500 lbs), compared to 318 kg (700 lbs) for grain-fed veal cattle. Implants are permitted in bovine animals destined for the beef market, but not the veal market.

It is important to keep in mind as a veal producer that you are not permitted to implant veal—regardless of what you hear, **implanting veal is not permitted!** As veal producers, we are proud of the fact that there are very few violations in our sector since implanting stopped in 2005; let's keep it that way.

We are proud of the improvements our industry has made and will continue to make. If you have questions about the regulation changes to antimicrobial usage and/or implant use in veal production please contact the office; we are here for our members to discuss issues like this. ■



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Funding announced for new veal cattle research project

VFO partnering with University of Guelph on meloxicam depletion study

Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) is pleased to announce the recent approval of funding for a new research project that will see the organization partner with the University of Guelph on a study related to safe use of a pain relief and anti-inflammatory medication with dairy calves for grain-fed veal production.

This study of the use of meloxicam will receive funding through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (the Partnership) under the Animal Health-Applied Research, Pilot Projects and Demonstrations project category. Meloxicam is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) that is approved for use as an anti-inflammatory, antipyretic and analgesic (pain relief) in cattle in Canada and marketed as Metacam™ by Boehringer Ingelheim.

“We want to ensure the best care for our animals. This project will give us insight into managing their health needs and minimizing risks to food safety. Through the Partnership, our government is pleased to support such important research to benefit animal welfare,” said Ernie Hardeman, Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Currently, meloxicam’s product label carries a warning “not to use in veal calves” as a withdrawal interval (i.e. time after last treatment with drug before the animal may be safely processed for food) has not been established in pre-ruminating calves. Therefore, the use of meloxicam in veal cattle is considered “extra label”.

The primary goal of the project is to establish a withdrawal interval for veal cattle based on the Health Canada’s approved Maximum Residue Limits (MRL; maximum allowable concentrations of drug in edible products of animals that will ensure human food safety). Currently, there is no data evaluating the depletion of meloxicam in grain-fed veal cattle because the market is a relatively small market compared to other commodities like dairy or beef cattle.

Leading the project will be Dr. Ron Johnston, Associate Professor, Veterinary Clinical Pharmacology, co-director of the Canadian Global Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank (CgFARAD) and Dr. Dave Renaud, Associate Professor. The results of this research will be communicated through CgFARAD enabling veterinarians wanting to prescribe meloxicam with current up to date research supporting the meat withdrawal recommendation.

The investment is too great for pharmaceutical companies to make in the drug approval process for veal cattle so as an industry it’s important for us to commit resources to initiatives like this. This data could then be used by industry to better align with food safety and calf health and welfare protocols.

“This is a positive and proactive initiative for grain-fed veal producers. Our industry is changing with respect to antimicrobials and VFO wants to support our producers by working



“ We want to ensure the best care for our animals. This project will give us insight into managing their health needs and minimizing risks to food safety. ”
-the Honourable Ernie Hardman

on these types of projects,” stated VFO Chair Tom Kroesbergen.

VFO, through the Canadian Veal Association (CVA) has been working collaboratively with Health Canada on updating product labels that state “do not use in calves to be processed for veal as a withdrawal period has not been established for pre-ruminating calves” or “do not use in calves to be processed for veal”. Through this work, there remain a number of outstanding products that have been prioritized and will be further evaluated. VFO and CVA have prioritized meloxicam as the first priority as it aligns with VFO’s commitment of improving animal welfare.

“This project is a key strategic objective for VFO because we want to provide the industry (veterinarians and producers) with the right tools to avoid positive residue violations when using products like meloxicam extra label,” added Kendra Keels, VFO’s Industry Development Director.

VFO is a producer-run organization that represents the interests of Ontario’s veal producers. VFO is committed to promoting industry growth and viability through collaboration, innovation, marketing and education. To learn more, visit ontarioveal.on.ca.

This project was funded in part through the the Partnership, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.



Emergency response workshops

By Susan Fitzgerald, Executive Director,

Ontario Livestock & Poultry Council



Federal and provincial government departments follow a formal Incident Management System (IMS) approach when responding to emergencies. The system was originally developed to ensure a clear and coordinated response when multiple emergency response divisions were required to work together. An example of this would be when multiple fire departments or fire teams are called in to fight a wildfire. This same IMS structure would be used for emergencies involving agriculture; such as floods or significant disease outbreaks.

With funding through the Canadian Agricultural

Partnership, a federal-provincial initiative, IMS education materials will be developed and the delivery of workshops will be customized to be relevant for each major Ontario livestock group. “Our government recognizes how important it is for farmers to be prepared in an emergency,” said Ernie Hardeman, Ontario’s Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. “Through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, we are very pleased to support continuing education for our producers by providing another tool for farmers to help them in an emergency situation.”

The goal of these workshops is to increase producer and industry awareness and understanding of the basic concepts of emergency response protocols tailored to the unique needs/risks of their sector. This will help improve the ability and capacity of commodity sectors to prepare for, and respond effectively to, emergencies that may impact their sector or society at large.

Veal Farmers of Ontario will explore opportunities to have workshops developed for the veal sector. ■

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When keeping farm records, start small and think beyond requirements

Erich Weber, Business Finance Specialist

Megan Van Schaik, Beef Cattle Specialist, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs

Keeping up-to-date, accurate records is key to the success and profitability of any veal operation. In other words, it is good for business.

This is not a new concept, but in today's busy world, it sometimes seems like an unachievable feat. From feeding, to maintenance, to field work, and many other tasks around the farm, there does not seem to be a lot of time left over to update your records. However, this seemingly burdensome task does come with benefits, if records are used effectively.

If you are a part of a certifiable program, such as the Verified Veal Program, you are required to keep protocols, complete records, and adopt the mantra "say what you do, do what you say, and prove it!"

While this is a core practice of any certified program, what if you could use your records beyond demonstrating compliance to program protocols? It could be to improve animal health, reduce medication use, make purchasing decisions, and create cost and labour efficiencies on farm.

Planning

Developing a plan for data collection needs to start with understanding your goals. This means determining the questions you want to answer, and then identifying how you will collect the information to answer those questions.

Data collection is a necessary part of

developing metrics and goal-setting on a farm. You must then analyze your data to measure success. Some information you may already be recording, while some will still need to be collected. If you feel overwhelmed by data collection and analysis, start small, identifying a priority area for improvement on your farm, and go from there.

Examples of production records to create efficiencies and make improvements on a farm are:

- **Treatment records** track medication use, morbidity and mortality, broken needles, treatment start and end dates, withdrawal periods, etc. While this information is important for food safety and responsible use of antimicrobials, it can also be analyzed to determine common health issues on a farm, the amount of medications used, costs associated with treatments, etc. In turn, this information can be used, with support from your veterinarian, to improve animal health and reduce antibiotic use by modifying preventative health management protocols and making environmental changes.
- **Feeding records** of calves on a milk or grain-based ration, coupled with

weighing calves, can help you determine rate of gain and feed efficiency. Tracking off-feed incidents can also help identify animal health issues. You can also track feeding costs more easily with detailed feeding records. As feed costs are a major component of the cost of production improvements in feed efficiency, this practice will help improve the bottom line.

- **Incoming/outgoing calf records** or traceability is an important aspect of data collection in the livestock industry. Understanding where your calves come from and assessing the health and performance data by calf supplier can help you determine the origin of your high-performing and healthiest calves and help you choose calf suppliers accordingly.
- **Slaughter records** may include feedback on condemnations from the packer. This information can be cross-referenced with animal health records and can be used to understand how condemnations can be prevented in the future.

Records are more easily analyzed if kept in electronic form. Maintaining electronic records that allow for data manipulation can help you look at trends for your herd.

User-friendly records

There are numerous record-keeping software programs that are user-friendly. Before you purchase a program, consider:

- ➔ Where data will be stored;
- ➔ Who can have access to the data;
- ➔ What reports can the program generate;
- ➔ How to upload information into the program; and,
- ➔ The compatibility of the program with smart phone technology.

A study conducted in 2015 from the Agri-Food Management Institute (AMI) found that one of the best management skills that leads to profitable farmers is keeping accurate financial records. A similar study completed by the Ontario Sheep Farmers came to a similar conclusion—it found that sheep producers who kept records on the genetics of their flocks experienced increased profitability.

Keeping accurate records is important, but farmers will also need to take the time to analyze their records to make the right decisions for their business. ■

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VFO awards top honours to Lambton College for their Best Veal Sandwich



Lambton College's Clarisse Gibbons and Jacob Douglas earned a cool \$1,000.00 by placing first in the search for *Ontario's Best Veal Sandwich by a Culinary Arts Student* competition, held at the Restaurant Canada (RC) Show 2019 in Toronto, Ontario. Sponsored by the Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO), the competition was the culmination of an education initiative by VFO that taught students about the value, versatility and variety of Ontario veal.

From October 2018 to January 2019, VFO toured culinary colleges across the province teaching the next generation of chefs about Ontario veal's premium profile, menu versatility and profitability as well as the unique farming and flavour attributes of the grain-fed variety. Following those lectures, several schools held internal competitions to find out who made the best veal sandwich. The winners participated in the final competition at the RC Show alongside emcee John Catucci, the host of *You Gotta Eat Here!* on Food Network Canada. Participating schools included Toronto's Humber and Centennial Colleges and Sarnia's Lambton College.

Judges found the veal in Lambton's entry tender

and a perfect complement to its tomato sauce. After pan-frying their bun in garlic butter, they added an additional punch with toppings that included a slice of prosciutto and garlic aioli. Final results placed Centennial College in second, with students Luis Valencia and Stephanie Amos sharing \$500 and Samantha Simms and Patrick Mullin of Humber College taking third place and a prize of \$250. "The creativity and personalization these students brought to each of their sandwiches was exceptional," said Jennifer Haley, Executive Director of the VFO and a judge in the competition. "For the last few years the VFO has undertaken a search for *Ontario's Best Veal Sandwich* among restaurants, and I am always

surprised at how the flavours and preparations of each sandwich are as unique as their maker. These students showed us that when given a lean cut of our grain-fed veal, they were able to accentuate its subtle flavour to create recipes that could be on a menu today." "We know that a higher percentage of veal is eaten out of the home, in restaurants, and it is very important that we educate and expose culinary students—the future chefs and restaurant owners of tomorrow—about Ontario veal and ensure it remains on the menu," added Haley. After such a successful program, the VFO plans to extend its education program for Ontario culinary schools into the fall of 2019. ■



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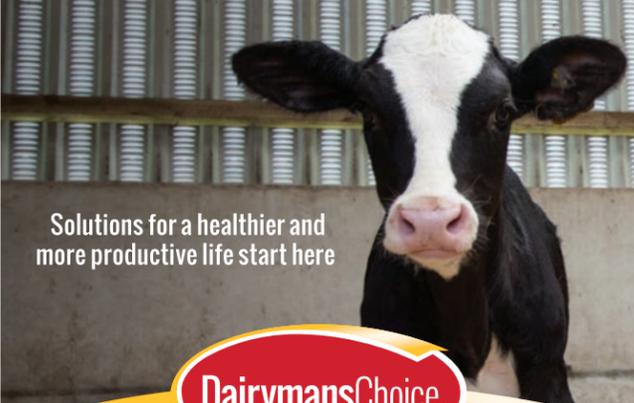
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Benchmarking project

The Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) has retained Acer Consulting to conduct a benchmarking study of the calf industry. Focus groups of veal and dairy producers were conducted in February to help gain an understanding of the current knowledge, attitudes, and practices of producers when it comes to managing calf health. We will identify perceived gaps in knowledge and training, barriers to adoption and behaviour change, and views on the most effective outreach channels to encourage adoption, influence attitudes, and increase knowledge. The VFO feels the study will help in our future planning for educational resources for the veal and dairy calf industries.

Pre-budget consultation document submission

The VFO recently submitted its pre-budget consultation document to Ontario's Finance Minister Fedeli. Together with our livestock industry partners, the VFO appreciates the government's commitment to the Risk Management Program (RMP) and we believe that continued investment in the RMP is a top priority. Risk management programs must be predictable, bankable and timely. They also need to be free of unnecessary red tape and administration. The RMP was designed by farmers for farmers to achieve those goals and VFO is committed to working with the Ontario government to ensure taxpayers and farmers continue to receive value from the investment made in the RMP. Investment in this program will ensure the program works for farmers while making a significant contribution to Ontario's rural economy.

VFO chats with farmers at the South Western Ontario Dairy Symposium

The VFO had another great opportunity to chat with dairy producers at the South Western Ontario Dairy Symposium held in Woodstock in late February. Popular topics included marketing bob calves, neonatal calf health, and *Salmonella* Dublin. Attendance at events alongside our industry partners will continue to show our commitment to the dairy calf and veal sectors. The momentum gained at this event will serve us well as we look to our next opportunities to meet with producers.

Licence fees

As a veal producer purchasing male dairy calves for the veal or dairy-beef market the \$4.00 licence fee is to be remitted to the VFO. Worksheets are available to download on the VFO website at ontarioveal.on.ca/about-us/licence-fee-faq.

If you purchase bob calves directly from another farmer (e.g. dairy farmer) this is called a "private treaty" sale. The \$4.00/head must be deducted for these calves. As the buyer, and the farmer who is finishing the veal cattle, you would deduct the \$4.00/head VFO licence fee from your purchase price and remit the sellers information on Form 5 since you are remitting it on their behalf.

Important changes to the Ontario Beef Cattle Financial Protection Program

Effective January 1, 2019, Agricorp will become the new Delivery Agent of the Ontario Beef Cattle Financial Protection Program and Administrator for the Livestock Financial Protection

Board. All communication, including but not limited to: Late Payment Reports, Claims to the Fund and Licencing inquiries, must be directed to Agricorp. Visit agricorp.com or phone 1-888-247-4999 for more information.

Top 10 ways to help prevent barn fires

The VFO has been involved in the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs' Barn Fire Risk Reduction Advisory Panel since 2016. The panel is a working group for industry stakeholders to discuss the impact of barn fires on Ontario agriculture, and to address legislation and policy change to reduce the risk of barn fires while keeping building costs affordable for producers. The panel has developed a factsheet on the 10 ways to reduce the risk of barn fires, and videos on good housekeeping, safety of electrical equipment, and hot works safety. Visit omafra.gov.on.ca/english/engineer/barnfire/fireprevention.htm to learn more.

Code of Practice for the Transportation of Livestock and Poultry

The National Farm Animal Care Council will be updating the *Code of Practice for the Transportation of Livestock and Poultry* (the Code). Initial work with the scientific committee has begun and the Code committees will be starting later this spring. The updated Code is set to be completed by 2023. The scope of the Code will cover cattle, pigs, poultry, sheep and equine for road transportation.

Transportation regulations released

New transport regulations under the Health of

Animals Act were published in Canada Gazette 2 in late February; the regulations will take effect in early 2020. Visit gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p2/2019/2019-02-20/html/sor-dors38-eng.html to read the full text of the regulations.

VFO attends the 2019 CDX

The VFO exhibited at the Canadian Dairy Expo (CDX) in early April, connecting with new and existing members, discussing industry issues and promoting calf care resources. We encouraged producers to stop by the booth, tweeting throughout the day and promoting our location on both the Calf Care Corner Facebook page and VFO Twitter account. Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, also stopped by our booth and Director Brian Keunen thanked him for his continued support of the Risk Management Program.



VFO Director Brian Keunen shares a laugh with Ernie Hardeman, Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, at the CDX.

"Using beef sires in your herd" panel sponsored by VFO well-received

The VFO sponsored a panel talk in the Dairy Classroom at the CDX as part of our mandate to bring programs and education to our members and provide value for the licence fees we collect. Along with perspectives from calf buyers and industry specialists, the panel also featured dairy farmers who incorporate beef genetics in their breeding programs. They provided key insights on how they make it work for their herds, such as which cows to select, calving considerations and how they market their beef-cross calves. Discussion on what the market currently looks like in this rapidly changing landscape to predictions for the future had the audience engaged and approaching our panelists after the talk was over to continue the conversation.



The VFO-sponsored panel: Rita Maciukiewicz, Aaron Keunen, Brad Gilchrist, and Craig Connell.

Preventing manure and mud tags

With the wet, cool conditions we are seeing this spring, preventing manure tags should be top of mind for cattle producers. Results from the 2016-17 National Beef Quality Audit show that tag costs (manure and mud on the hide) hit about \$30 million, which is in the range of \$10 per head. Shipping finished cattle covered with manure tags is a food safety concern. Manure that is embedded in the animal's hair can contaminate the meat at slaughter with harmful pathogens like *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) O157: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. "Shipping a dirty animal may hit you in the pocketbook," warns Kendra Keels, Industry Development Director at VFO. "Not only are you creating the potential for contamination, but you're creating more work at the plant by slowing down lines to allow for additional trimming of the carcass. The packer may even stop accepting animals from your farm because the animals you're shipping are a liability." As a rule of thumb, the Verified Veal Program recommends that 75 per cent of calves on-farm have no more than 30 per cent of their abdomen coated in manure. ■

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Farm & Food Care Ontario year in review

By Kelly Daynard

Executive Director,
Farm & Food Care Ontario



Health and safety. What do you think of when you hear someone say this? Are you thinking of boring training conducted once a year? Or are you thinking of someone you know who may have been injured or a life lost as a result of an accident on the farm. For producers and growers who have employees, you know they are more like family than just an “employee”. You trust them to help you care for your livelihood, and in return, are you doing everything you can to care for them? Most importantly... are you providing them with a safe workplace?

Now, as we know, what on the farm is safe? Not too much. However, being proactive and taking preventative measures can help you to create a Health and Safety Plan on your farm that may save a life, or help prevent an injury to one of your team members. Part of building a safe work place is formulating a health and safety plan. A plan should be comprehensive and well laid out. It should protect you and your team members from harm and should aid you if the Ministry of Labour comes to pay you a visit.

There are many steps in developing a health and safety plan. Each step is important and will help you monitor your farm's status and progress of health and safety.

Follow the next steps to create a health and safety program, and in return, a safer work place; for yourself, your family, and your team members.

STEP 1 Complete a safety audit – walk through your entire facility. What are some areas you could improve? Where are the hazards on your farm? Do all of your PTOs have guards on them? Are there fire extinguishers and first aid kits? Do you have a plan if there was ever to be

a barn fire? Take time to look at things you walk past every day and ask yourself “Is this as safe as it can be?”.

STEP 2 Conduct a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) to determine what positions on your farm pose which risks to the team member completing those tasks. For example, the person who may be dealing with manure storage and related tasks – what could go wrong there? Make a list of the threats that people in their respective positions could face. Some more include, machinery threats, livestock threats, slips, trips and falls, and more.

STEP 3 Develop a health and safety manual including Safe Operating Procedures (SOP). For those risks that are high, there should be an SOP available to all team members. This SOP will outline the proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that should be worn while completing the task, as well as pre-operational, operational, and post-operational safety measures to take. This can also include your own procedures on your farm for quality purposes. For example, an SOP on handling livestock might include PPE such as CSA approved steel-toed boots, and a pre-operational measure of knowing where the exits are out of pens you are working in before you enter.

STEP 4 Implement training for all team members on the relevant SOPs to their positions. If you have someone who is not doing any field work for you, they may not need to be trained on driving machinery on the road, so we don't need to train them on something that wouldn't pose a threat to them. Rather, train them on skid steer safety, and other tasks they will be completing. This training should be documented, and should be refreshed as

often as necessary, or at least once a year as a reminder.

STEP 5 Develop health and safety policies, such as a Commitment Statement to Health and Safety, as well as a Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy, one on PPE and an Emergency Preparedness Plan. Ensure your staff are trained on these policies, and again, document, document, document! Always make sure you can prove in writing that something has been trained on, spoken about or reviewed with your team!

STEP 6 Conduct farm safety audits on a yearly basis. Review Safe Operating Procedures, Policies and training. These audits allow you to see progress in your health and safety program and gives you an opportunity to comply with the Ministry of Labour requirements to inspect your farm on an ongoing basis.

STEP 7 Consult with employees. Discuss their safety concerns and make adjustments to the health and safety program as needed.

There are many more steps to creating and implementing a full and well-rounded safety program. But by starting with following the above steps you are on your way to creating a really good health and safety program for your farm. Though this may seem like a daunting task, the results are worth the time and effort put into it. And the goal of course, is that your team and yourself return home to your families and loved ones the same way you left for work, and that at the end of the day everyone is happy, safe and healthy. ■



For more information, visit peoplemanagementgroup.com.

In 2018, Farm & Food Care Ontario (FFCO) piloted several initiatives that will be of interest to veal farmers in Ontario. The organization appreciates the support shown by its membership, including the Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO), which makes these initiatives possible.

The Real Dirt on Farming

Several distribution goals for the fourth edition of *The Real Dirt on Farming* were met in 2018. The 12-page digest was inserted in the *Globe and Mail*, reaching 200,000 households across the country. Copies have been mailed to elected officials and Registered Dietitians across Canada. Four million copies of *The Real Dirt on Farming* booklet have now been distributed to Canadians since the publication's inception in 2006.



Veal farmer volunteers, Joyce Feenstra and Judy Dirksen, ready to answer consumer questions about veal at Breakfast on the Farm.

Breakfast on the Farm

With partners like VFO, Breakfast on the Farm continues to be FFCO's largest public event series. In 2018, more than 4000 guests and

220 volunteers participated in two Breakfast on the Farm events in the Hamilton and Ottawa areas. Appreciation goes to the veal farmers who volunteered to work in the veal exhibit, joining dozens of other commodity groups and agribusinesses in an excellent public showcase of Ontario's agriculture and food sector.

Union Station

In celebration of Ontario Agriculture Week, FFCO brought together a dozen Ontario commodity groups, including VFO, to bring the farm to Union Station – Toronto's busiest transportation hub. Forty volunteers and farmers held a pop-up event to talk food and farming, answer questions, and thank consumers for buying local. Along with helpful resources, commuters were surprised with more than 10,000 local food samples. Appreciation goes to the veal farmers who volunteered for the activation.

Animal Care Helpline

FFCO's Animal Care Helpline fielded 26 calls in 2018. The helpline allows an opportunity for peer to peer education and assistance in situations that stem from unforeseen personal or financial circumstances, where assistance from within the agricultural community can be most effective. FFCO offers training for commodity partners and their members who are tasked with following up on animal care concerns.

Livestock Emergency Projects

In 2018, FFCO continued to be active in Livestock Emergency Preparedness projects including; the distribution of a Truck Rollover Guide to all 450 of Ontario's fire departments; delivering presentations covering fire awareness

to livestock commodity groups and first responders, and securing Canadian Agricultural Partnership funding for the expansion of these projects in 2019. FFCO continues the FLIR (heat sensing) lending program which farmers can use to check for potential fire risks on their own farm.

Timing Matters Working Group

The Timing Matters Working Group is a coalition of farm organizations that promotes responsible manure application stewardship. The Peer to Peer group is a sub-committee that focuses on winter manure management with the goal of increasing nutrient efficiency and reducing the environmental risks that result from spreading manure on frozen or snow-covered ground. FFCO was instrumental in the Peer to Peer group securing (72K) in funding from the Environment Canada Lake Erie Fund for initiatives over the next two years.

Farm Environmental and Farm Animal Care Councils

In 2018, three council meetings covered topics including; glyphosate on trial in California court and the court of public opinion, changes to anti-microbial legislation, pesticide re-evaluation at Pesticide Management Regulatory Agency, and updates on farm fires awareness. These meetings tackle issues of relevance to everyone in Ontario agriculture and shape the work that FFCO is doing in the areas of farm environmental sustainability and animal care.

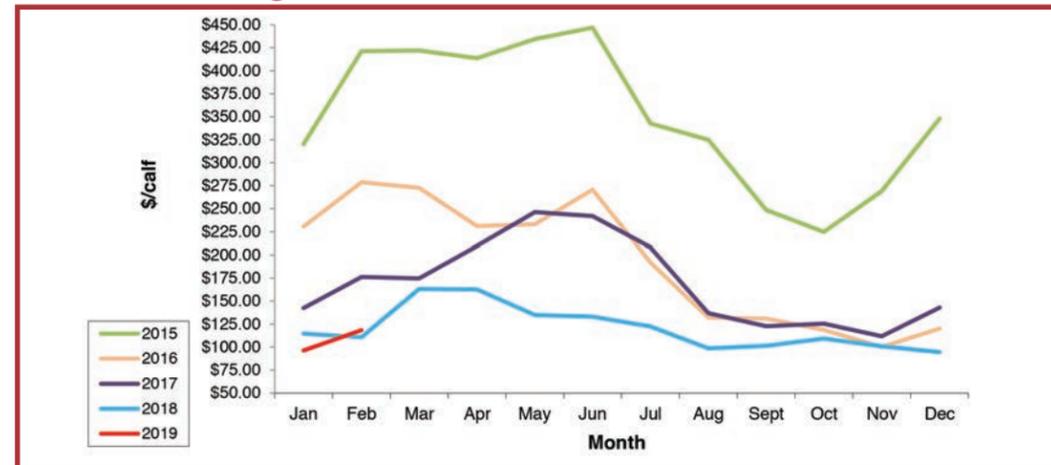
To learn more about all of Farm & Food Care's initiatives, visit www.farmfoodcareON.org. Comments and questions can always be directed to info@farmfoodcare.org. ■



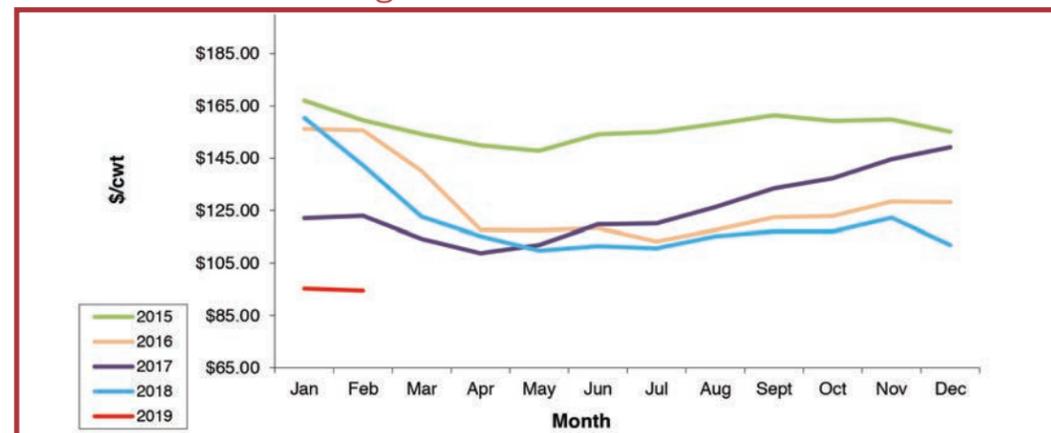
Veal Market Information

Veal market data is collected electronically from Ontario sales barns.

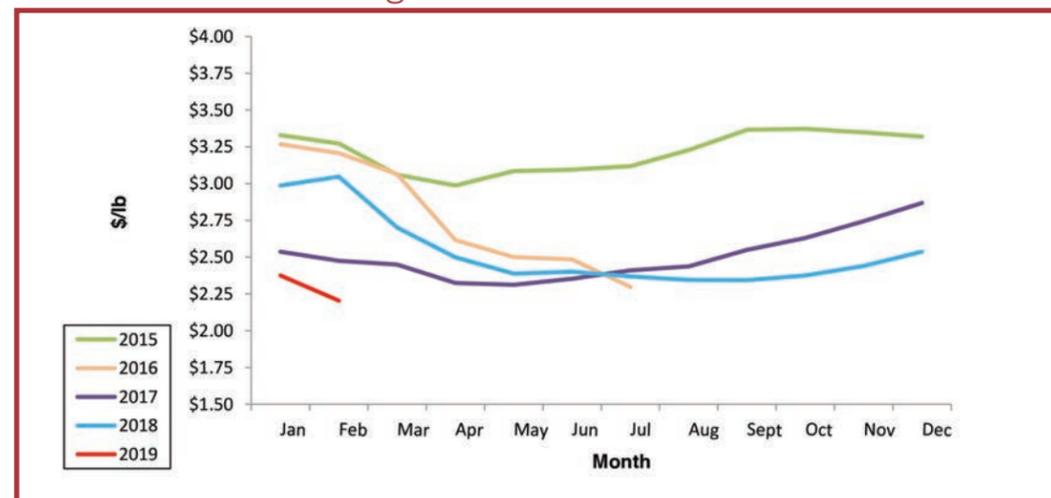
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Licensed dealers

As a veal (bob calves and finished veal cattle) producer, you should be dealing with licensed dealers who are remitting check-off on behalf of the farmers they are collecting from.

If you are selling bob calves from your dairy farm, the \$4.00 check-off is to be collected by the person purchasing those calves. If you sell your calves to a sales barn, the check-off is remitted on your behalf. It is always good to check with the Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) office to ensure we have your updated contact information, including your e-mail address, to remain current with timely information.

If you are dealing with an unlicensed dealer you are not protected under the Ontario Beef Cattle Financial Protection Program. 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 licensed, ask to see the licence or if you are not comfortable doing that then check the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) website at omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/fpu/fpu_lists.htm or call the VFO office.

Licence fee reminders

In order to assist those who have not yet remitted their bob calf purchases from private treaty or dealer sales, the VFO has a **Monthly Licence Fee Remittance Worksheet** available to assist in calculating remittances from January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019.

Please take the time to fill this worksheet out if you are not currently remitting on a regular basis. As a reminder, *Regulation 58/15 (i)* 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" are considered veal cattle.)

If you have not already sent in your Form 1 identifying yourself as a veal producer, please do so. They can be e-mailed, faxed or sent by regular mail to the office.

If you require additional copies of the **Monthly Licence Fee Remittance Worksheet, Form 1** or **Form 5**, please contact the office.

THE Connection

Coordinates and Staff

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

Tel: 519-824-2942
Fax: 519-824-2534
info@livestockalliance.ca

Jennifer Haley
Executive Director
jhaley@livestockalliance.ca

Kendra Keels
Industry Development Director
kkeels@livestockalliance.ca

Jennifer Bullock
Projects & Communications Manager
jbullock@livestockalliance.ca

Molly Mazerolle
Administrative Assistant
info@livestockalliance.ca

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