

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.

Mixing feed

Proper mixing of the feed is important. The correct balance of ingredients entering the gut initiates good digestion and use of nutrients. A well-mixed uniform ration is optimum to enhance performance and improve animal health.

It is advisable to start with large volume ingredients than add according to particle size, ending with the smaller-volume ingredients.

Mixers vary in efficiency and mixing time with different feed formulas. It is recommended to avoid under- or over-mixing and best to review the mixer's calibrations to become familiar with its operations.

Mixer efficiency is affected by many factors, including the type of mixer, wear, and maintenance, feed build-up in the mixer or on the blades, and the size of the batch you are mixing. Research shows the optimum mixing time can only be determined by testing the mixer. Also, some mixers will not mix well regardless of how long you run them.

It is good practice to determine optimum mixing time by conducting a mixer efficiency test. This should be performed at least twice a year and any time the mixer is adjusted, new parts are installed (ribbons, screws, or paddles) or procedural changes are made.

Mixer efficiency tests involve analyzing 10 sequenced samples from the mixer per mixing time at equal intervals between initial and final discharge. The feed formula used and the ingredient or nutrient tested (such as a drug or salt) should be appropriate for the test.

Mixing medicated feed

Extreme caution must be taken when mixing medication into feed. It is highly recommended a mixer performance test be completed before making medicated feed batches to ensure the mixer is working optimally to evenly distribute the medication.

Always have a prescription from your veterinarian for the medication you are mixing and be familiar with the dosage and inclusion rate (grams or kgs per tonne).

Verified Veal Program

The Canadian on-farm food safety program for veal has requirements and a protocol for mixing medicated feed.

- All equipment dedicated to the handling and distribution of feed for grain-fed veal must be visually inspected weekly to ensure equipment is free of organic material build-up.
- Feed mixers and distribution equipment in veal operations may not be used for mixing feed for other species.
- When medicated feed with a withdrawal period is mixed on-farm, the **Grain-fed Medicated Feed Mixing and Distribution Protocol** must be followed to avoid hazards such as the wrong animal health product being used, the wrong dosage administered, and them medicated feed being given to the wrong group of animals.
- Sequencing, flushing, and cleaning procedures must be followed to prevent residues in the next batch of feed.

For the complete protocol, contact the VFO office.

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

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

Find Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs veal resources here: <https://bit.ly/OMAFRAVealBusiness>

References available upon request.

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

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

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

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

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

[OntarioVeal](https://www.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.

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