

THE Connection

Spring 2022 Volume 4, No. 1

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VEAL
Farmers
of Ontario



IS YOUR FLORFENICOL THICK AS SYRUP?



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Chair's MESSAGE



Pascal Bouilly

Challenges and opportunities with calf supply

Perhaps one of the most important issues that Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) has worked on over the past several years is calf supply and all components that make up calf supply—colostrum, neonatal calf management, transportation, housing, nutrition, feeding requirements, price, etc. And now it seems that the calf supply has come to the forefront once again but for a different reason—the actual supply of Holstein calves available to go into veal production.

For many years, the veal sector has relied on the steady supply of male Holstein calves coming from the dairy sector. This surplus calf was not needed in the dairy herd for reproductive purposes and was not desirable for beef production systems. The veal cattle industry grew and developed with this supply of male Holstein calves and along with the purchase of milk components for feed ingredients, the veal sector has had a significant financial impact on the dairy sector.

However, dairy farmers have been making different reproductive decisions for their herds and have more tools at their disposal now to really narrow in on maximizing desirable genetic traits for their dairy herd. Sexed semen, embryo transfers and focusing in on the top-producing cows through data management has led to very intentional and specific breeding decisions that will produce replacement heifer calves for the herd. The bottom half of the herd is now a terminal calf, and a growing number of dairy producers are choosing to use a beef bull with the goal of trying to get more money for the crossbred calf since it will be leaving the herd regardless of whether it is a heifer or a bull calf.

There are a number of other market factors involved as well, including the higher-yielding cows producing more milk, lack of an export heifer market and a decline in the overall beef herd numbers. The demand for the crossbred calves from the beef sector is growing and they can pay more money for these calves since they are keeping the cattle longer and finishing them at a much heavier weight. The beef-on-dairy trend is growing and there are no signs of it changing—it is a new management practice for the dairy producer.

This leaves the veal sector in a precarious position of not having the supply of calves to put into veal production and now having to compete for calves that were once unwanted. Many veal farmers will have a dual stream operation of both grain-fed veal and dairy-beef to maximize on

efficiencies and there are also dairy crossbred calves going into beef feedlots for finishing. The markets have definitely changed.

Some might say the Canadian veal sector is at a crossroads and our calf supply is being threatened. Where there is a choice of which way to go, we must also look at the opportunities that are available to our sector moving forward. Can we maximize carcass quality and feed efficiency that produces a higher-yielding veal carcass with a beef cross? There are certainly challenges as well, like rationalizing the increase in cost of production and the uncertainty of whether the market will yield higher prices as a result? We need to understand all of these impacts to our sector on the path forward and this will be a focus of VFO in the coming year. Stay tuned as we look to work with industry partners to better understand the challenges and opportunities that we face with the changes in the calf supply.

Thanks to those of you who were able to attend our virtual Annual General Meeting. Your support of the organization and our sector is very much appreciated and important. I would like to welcome our newest Board member Aaron Keunen—we are looking forward to working with you and benefitting from your insight and expertise. I would also like to acknowledge the retirement of long-serving board member Brian Keunen, who was VFO's first chair in 2015 and also served on the Ontario Veal Association Board since 2005.

I look forward to the year ahead and returning as VFO's Chair. I have often said that I feel I get a lot more out of being part of the Board than I feel I might sometimes contribute as there is so much to learn and understand, but it is also very gratifying being part of an organization where we all work together on the issues that really matter to our members. Please do not hesitate to reach out to any member of the VFO Board should you wish to discuss an issue. Wishing you all a very productive spring planting season! ■



Jennifer Haley

Always ready to do what is needed to promote the industry

As a smaller livestock organization amongst the many different groups representing the diversity of Ontario's agri-food sector, it is sometimes a challenge to ensure our organization's voice is heard. And sometimes, despite our best efforts to amplify the messages and keep the lines of communications open, we are not always sure if we are being heard. There are many voices to be heard at the table.

Over the years, our organization has prioritized the importance of collaboration with our industry partners to advance not only the common industry goals that benefit all farmers, but those specific to Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) as well. With this strategic approach we have been at the table for many pivotal and important issues.

Recently, Minister Thompson joined our Annual General Meeting (AGM) to bring greetings to VFO members and also to provide an overview of the work she is doing at the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. It was very reassuring to hear

from Minister Thompson about her perceptions of how VFO is viewed by her Ministry colleagues and how VFO fits into the broader organizational landscape. Minister Thompson remarked that, "VFO is well-represented and always there and ready to do what is needed to promote the industry and to be part of the collective voice for Ontario agriculture."

Minister Thompson added that the work VFO does on behalf of its members and the Ontario agri-sector, "Means so much and we need your type of dedication moving forward." Pascal and I were thrilled to hear these words from Minister Thompson as they are an affirmation of all that VFO has been doing to speak on behalf of the Ontario veal sector and make sure our voices are being heard as part of the ongoing conversations, and that we are part of the agri-food family sitting at the table.

VFO's strategy has been successful because we try to give more than we take. VFO's focus is always on the greater good and how that benefits our members as well. Our industry colleagues have welcomed us to the table to collaborate and contribute because we are a willing partner, and we all recognize we can do more together than we can on our own. Sometimes, organizations can get caught up in our respective 'silos' with our heads down working away on the issues but now, more than ever, there is a spirit

of cooperation and collaboration amongst many of the agri-food organizations.

Together with our Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition (OASC) partners, we are actively engaged with our provincial government to try and secure additional funding to the Risk Management Program (RMP). Costs of production keep rising and risks mitigation in the supply chain was tested during the pandemic. However, the RMP program remains underfunded and additional funds to the program will ensure sustainability for not only veal producers but all enrolled in the program.

VFO has also been at the 'table' to discuss processing capacity and its impact on the cattle sector. Additional processing capacity alleviates pressure on the veal sector and helps to ensure our cattle can continue to be marketed and processed without getting bumped. VFO has been collaborating with Meat & Poultry Ontario (MPO) and our livestock partners to ensure there are resources available to the processing sector and we are pleased to see government funding and investment in growing processing capacity in Ontario.

Additional issues that VFO is actively engaged on with our industry partners include access to large animal veterinarians, deadstock removal options, transportation, animal activists, and more. Allowing each of our voices to be heard and understood fuels the collaboration and as a result a more robust position can be developed. VFO looks forward to continuing to work with all our partners and be part of the collective voice for Ontario agriculture!

I would like to acknowledge our dedicated and knowledgeable staff members for their continued commitment to not only VFO but the Ontario agri-food sector. Together with the Board, our staff team divides and conquers on the many issues and ensures that VFO is well-represented at the many tables with both the larger and smaller organizations; all focused on collaboration and the common goals we all share in order to benefit our members. ■

"VFO is well-represented and always there and ready to do what is needed to promote the industry and to be part of the collective voice for Ontario agriculture."

- The Honourable Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Virtual Annual General Meeting HIGHLIGHTS

Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) was pleased to welcome attendees to our virtual Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Wednesday, March 9, 2022. At the afternoon event, industry leaders shared an overview of the projects and issues undertaken by VFO in 2021, highlighting the opportunities this past year has provided to work with our industry partners to achieve our goals and move forward together.

Thank you to our attendees, special guests, sponsors, staff, and Board of Directors—everyone had a vital role in making the 2022 virtual AGM a great success.



The 2021 Annual Report is available online at bit.ly/VFO2021Report.

Pascal Bouilly, VFO Chair and Jennifer Haley, VFO Executive Director, led our virtual AGM. Bouilly reflected on 2021 and provided insights into VFO's response to the many priorities of the sector.

lighting our special campaign shining a spotlight on the finalists and winners of previous years of the *Ontario's Best Veal Sandwich* competition, and touching on the past year's projects, activities, and issues addressed by VFO on behalf of its members.

Haley shared a brief overview of VFO's initiatives in 2021, high-



VFO was pleased to welcome the Honourable Lisa Thompson to our virtual AGM. Minister Thompson delivered greetings and a message on behalf of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, offering congratulations and thanks to VFO for the organization's contributions to Ontario agriculture.



VFO was also pleased to welcome Amy Cronin, Chair of the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission to our virtual AGM. Cronin provided greetings on behalf of the Commission to VFO and the membership.



Kendra Keels



Molly Mazerolle



At VFO, one of our core organizational beliefs is that our people are one of our greatest assets and without whom we would not be where we are today. VFO would like to take a moment to recognize two of these people—Kendra Keels and Molly Mazerolle. They recently celebrated their respective 15 and five-year work anniversaries with VFO, and we are lucky to have their skills, passion, and professionalism as part of our team.

Congratulations and thank you Kendra and Molly!



Annual VFO Board of Director's Award winner announced

Recognizing dedication and service to the veal cattle industry

Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) was pleased to announce this year's VFO Board of Director's Award winner at its recent virtual Annual General Meeting held March 9, 2022.

The VFO Board of Director's Award recognizes the contributions that many make to help the VFO Board achieve their goals. This year, Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) Ernie Hardeman was recognized for his involvement in the veal cattle industry.

"MPP Hardeman has worked to protect farmers, farm families and their businesses with the passing of the *Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020* and with his ongoing support of Ontario agriculture and in particular, veal farmers," says Pascal Bouilly, VFO Chair.

MPP Hardeman has been an advocate for Ontario farms over the years as an MPP, Minister of Agriculture, and Opposition Agriculture Critic. He was responsible for introducing Bill 156, which resulted in the passing of the *Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020*. This important legislation protects Ontario's food supply chain, from farm to table, without infringing on the right to peacefully protest.

"I want to thank Veal Farmers for this honour. Farmers and their families should feel safe in their own homes, and I am happy that through this legislation we have been able to increase their peace of mind," says MPP Hardeman.

"We thank MPP Hardeman for his dedication and commitment to the Ontario veal sector, he is truly deserving of this recognition," says Bouilly. ■

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Veal Farmers of Ontario announces leadership for 2022

Bouilly re-elected to another term as VFO Chair



Pascal Bouilly,
Chair



Cameron Knip,
Vice Chair

Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) is pleased to announce the re-election of Pascal Bouilly as Chair and Cameron Knip as Vice Chair, at a recent meeting of the Board of Directors.

Bouilly, the Dairy Calf Supply Chain Manager with Delft Blue Veal in Cambridge, was appointed to the VFO Board of Directors in 2015 and served as Vice Chair for two years prior to being elected Chair in 2020 and 2021. Bouilly is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the farm, specializing in starting young dairy calves for the grain-fed veal and dairy-beef sectors.

"The veal industry has undergone a great deal of change in recent years and it's important to

have a proactive organization like VFO to represent farmers, especially during times of uncertainty," says Bouilly. "As Chair, I look forward to the year ahead as we focus our attention on the issues, initiatives, and projects that will best support our members and our industry."

Knip, who joined the Board in 2019, raises veal cattle south of Exeter where he also cash crops with his family and is involved in a sow operation. He has served as Vice Chair since 2021.

"As Vice Chair, I look forward to continue working with my fellow directors to strategically address issues directly impacting male dairy calf and veal producers," says Knip. "Driving demand for Ontario veal through marketing initiatives and exploring export opportunities, along with continued focus on business risk management programs, will be key priorities for VFO this year."

Bouilly, Knip, and Aaron Keunen were acclaimed to the VFO Board at the 2022 virtual Annual General Meeting on March 9 and will serve three-year terms.

Palmerston-area producer Aaron Keunen raises Holstein calves for the grain-fed veal market as well as cattle for the backgrounding and finished beef cattle markets. He is also involved in his family businesses Maplevue Agri Ltd. and TruVital Animal Health.

Keunen fills a vacant seat from retiring long-time VFO Director Brian Keunen, who has been a member of the Board since VFO's inception in 2015 and was VFO's first Chair.

Returning to the eight member VFO Board of Directors are Sid Atkinson (Roseneath), Judy Dirksen (Harriston), Phil Kroesbergen (Mount Brydges), Kurtis Moesker (Stratford), and Dylan Yantzi (Tavistock).

"Thank you to each one of the members of the Board for your willingness to serve the Ontario veal cattle sector," says Bouilly. "And thank you to Brian Keunen for his many contributions to our organization and our industry." ■



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The imminent role of crossbred calves in veal production

Emily Croft, MSc. Student
Dr. Michael Steele, Associate Professor

University of Guelph



The use of sexed semen and beef-on-dairy breeding of dairy cows has been on the rise in recent years and has initiated changes in the calves that are available to the veal industry. Through these genetic selection programs, dairy farmers can use sexed semen to determine which high-producing cows will produce replacement heifers. In cows that are not selected to produce replacement heifers, the use of beef semen has become common. This produces a crossbred calf with increased value. These programs have been recognized for improving the environmental sustainability of producing calves on dairy farms and have elevated calves above being seen as co-products of dairy production. As these breeding programs continue to grow in prevalence, the role of crossbred calves in veal production remains in question.

Until recent years, the veal industry has been dominated by male Holstein calves. As these calves cannot be used as replacements in dairy herds, veal producers have had the opportunity to raise these calves as relatively low-cost co-products of the dairy industry. Consumers of veal look for a tender, lean and mild-tasting product, which has been achieved through the traditional raising practices of male calves within the Holstein breed. Crossbred calves have become increasingly common relative to Holstein calves, representing nearly 20 per cent of the calves produced by dairy farms in Quebec in 2019. An influx of crossbred calves in the years to come will disrupt traditional standards for raising veal, and the industry may need to change based on the challenges and opportunities these crossbred calves present.

The introduction of crossbred calves to the veal industry has led to some uncertainty from veal farmers and industry members. While the use of beef bulls to produce crossbred calves presents an opportunity for value-adding to calves for dairy farmers, it may concurrently shrink margins for veal farmers. Moreover, it may create concerns around product quality. Where Holstein bull calves provided consistency, crossbred calves are thought to have variations between male and female calves, as well as prominent breed differences. Variations in both the breed and sex of calves will result in differing growth capacities, carcass traits, and nutritional requirements. Kendra Keels of Veal Farmers of Ontario further identified issues with increased marbling in crossbred female calves, which would sacrifice the lean product targeted by veal producers. Integration of crossbred calves into veal production may require additional labour and new management techniques, such as grouping or individualized nutrition, to accommodate these differences and ensure the tender, lean veal product that consumers expect.

Crossbred calves may still hold some promise for veal farmers. At larger finishing weights of approximately 550 kilograms (1212 lbs.), previous research has shown that crossbred calves may have advantages in feed conversion, average daily gain and dressing percentage when compared to purebred Holstein calves. Further research into growth and carcass traits in crossbred calves being raised for veal may reveal profit margin saving benefits for veal farmers. Further exploration of the breed of beef bulls being used with Holstein cows, such as bulls with high genetic merit for growth and low marbling, may create opportunities for veal farmers to continue producing a high quality, consistent, and lean veal product from these crossbred calves.

“Crossbred calves will have a role within the veal industry, but breed will be an important consideration when deciding whether to enter each animal into the veal or dairy-beef market. Characteristics such as fat covering or marbling, sex, dressed yield, and performance, as well as calf cost premium should all be determining factors,” says Aaron Keunen of Maplevue Agri Ltd.

Crossbred calves may become increasingly available relative to purebred Holstein calves as the trend of beef-on-dairy breeding continues in the dairy industry. The growing population of crossbred calves may change the way the veal farmers manage and market their calves but could also present opportunities as greater understanding of the requirements and characteristics of these calves is established. ■

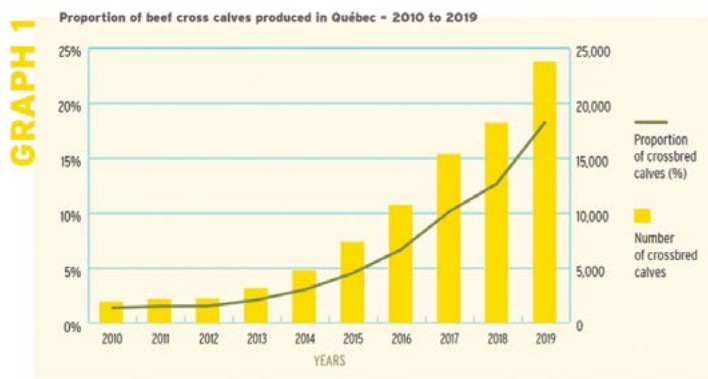


Figure 1 - Proportion of Crossbred Calves Produced in Quebec. Sourced from “The use of beef sire semen in dairy herds. A practical guide” by Les Producteurs de bovins du Québec, 2020.

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Back to basics calf care:

What do I look for when buying male dairy calves?

Lilian Schaer

Agricultural Writer

Veal production success and profitability start with healthy calves. The transition from dairy to veal farm can be a stressful one for male dairy calves, and not all animals will perform well in veal production.

There are important criteria to consider when you're buying male dairy calves for your operation to ensure you're getting the best animals that will thrive as they grow.

Getting calves off to a healthy start is key, so ask your calf supplier(s) about the health status of their herd and protocols they follow in the calves' first few days of life, so you're informed about any potential health or disease challenges.

The muzzle to tail check

An examination of the calf you're buying, even if it's just a visual inspection, is a great indicator of whether or not you're buying a healthy calf. Overall, the calf should be bright, alert, and well-hydrated with a normal body temperature of 38.5°C. Physically, here's what you should look for:

- Ears that are up and alert
- Smooth and shiny hair
- Slow, even breathing
- Clean and bright eyes
- Flank that is full and not sunken in
- Clean, dry muzzle
- Square and blocky back end that is clean and dry
- Dry, healed navel

Calves with unhealed navels are considered unfit for transport and cannot leave the farm unless it is to receive medical care recommended by a veterinarian. Similarly, calves with scours should not be transported to a new farm.

Make sure the calf is standing and walking solidly on all four legs. It should be at least nine days of age or older and weigh a minimum of 90 pounds. If you're concerned about whether a calf is ready for transport, consult Veal Farmers of Ontario's "Is this calf fit to ship" chart. It summarizes the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) regulations for the humane transport of livestock that must be followed.

Condition and colostrum

Using the tips above, look at the overall body condition of the calf. How full its abdomen is serves as an indicator of when it was last fed. In their early days in particular, calves require plenty of nutrients as they start to build their immune systems.

The single most important feed a newborn calf can receive is colostrum right after birth. It's what the calf relies on to receive immunity from its

mother and start developing its own healthy immune system. In fact, colostrum is the calf's main source of immunity, energy and nutrients in early life. So, ask if the calf was fed colostrum at birth. The first feeding should be as soon as possible, with the calf ideally receiving four litres of colostrum within six hours of birth.

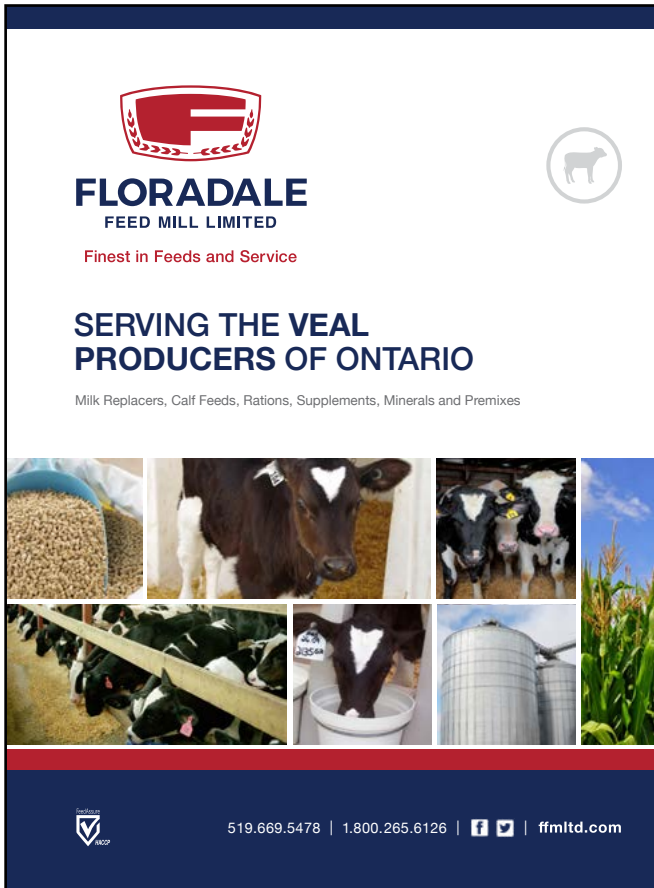
The opportunity cost

If a calf you're looking at does not meet these criteria, consider the financial impact this animal could have on your operation. For example, it is estimated that an infected navel can result in losses of approximately \$40 per calf.

Buying a good quality calf that is healthy will make a positive difference in both the quality of the finished animal you are marketing and the veal that consumers will purchase, as well as the overall profitability of your operation.

For more information, visit www.calfcare.ca. ■

This project was funded by the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a five-year federal-provincial-territorial initiative.



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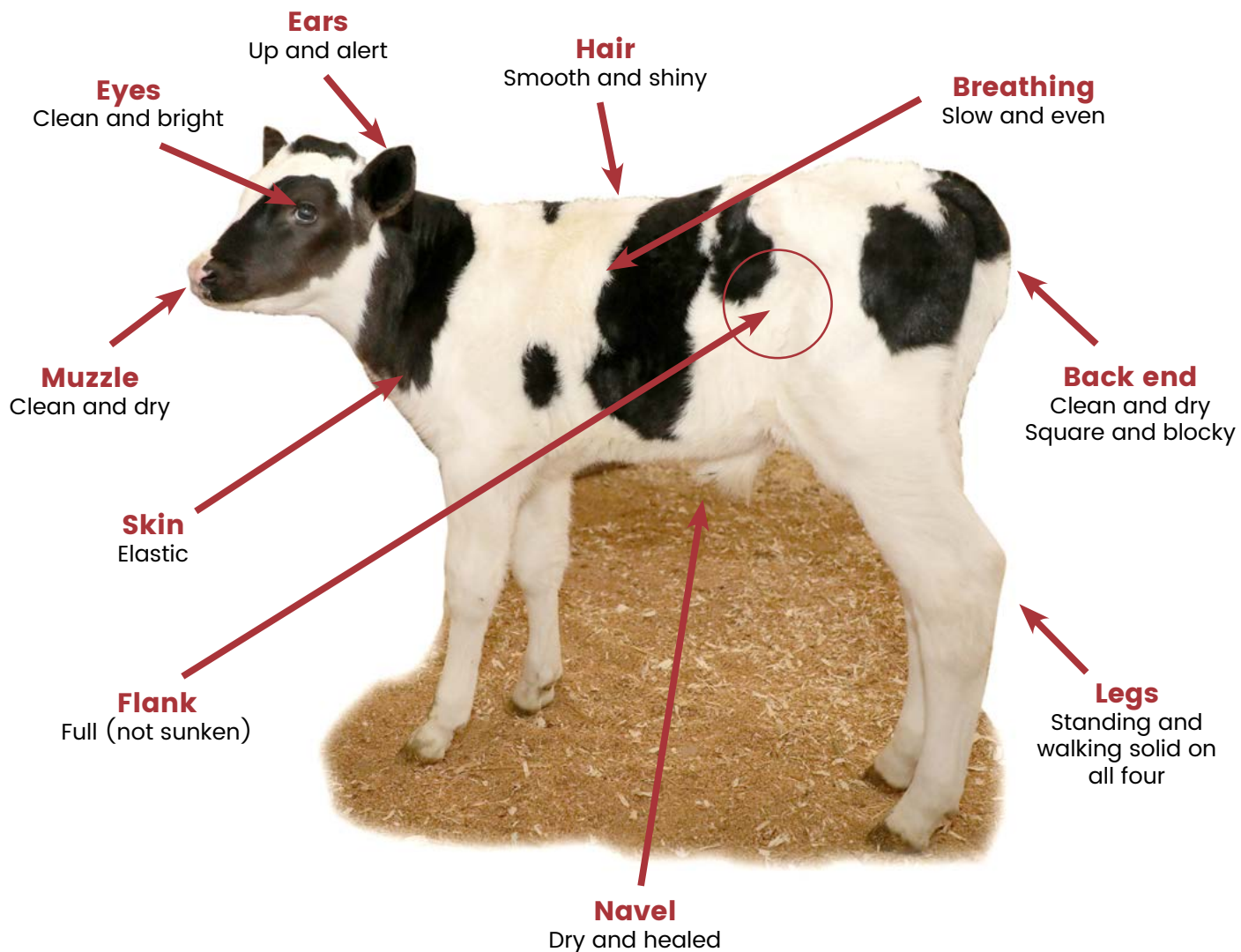
BUYING MALE DAIRY CALVES

Your calf care partners

What makes a good calf for veal production?

When buying male dairy calves for grain-fed veal production there are a few key areas to pay close attention to. A muzzle to tail examination (even visually) at the time of purchase will make the difference of well-finished marketed veal.

IS THE CALF A HOLSTEIN?



If the calf does not meet these criteria, then consider the price you are willing to pay. It is estimated that an infected navel can cost around \$40 in losses.

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Evaluating veal cattle manure

Fecal starch

Megan Van Schaik, Beef Cattle Specialist

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Monitoring starch digestion in cattle is an important aspect of assessing feed utilization efficiency, managing input costs, and gaining a better understanding of cattle performance and health. While feed efficiency is often measured through a feed conversion ratio, taking other measurements such as fecal starch into consideration helps to improve feed use efficiency.

A fecal starch analysis is an effective tool for monitoring starch digestion as fecal starch represents starch in the ration that has gone undigested. It provides a measure of the concentration of undigested starch and this unutilized starch represents a direct cost to the producer. Researchers have found that an increase in one per cent fecal starch results in a 0.162 Mcal reduction in net energy for maintenance (NEm) in cereal grains for feedlot cattle. Thus, a fecal starch analysis provides important insight into feed utilization efficiency and high values should prompt a review of areas where feed utilization efficiency could be improved.

There are a lack of fecal starch benchmarking data and guidelines for grain-fed veal finishing rations. Most of the information we have is extrapolated from the beef feedlot sector. It is known that fecal starch and total-tract starch digestibility are linearly related in feedlot cattle and lactating cows. A study by Dennis et al. (2017) found that fecal starch was not a good estimate of total tract starch digestibility in the pre-weaned calf but recognized the potential of using fecal starch for evaluating total tract starch digestibility in the post-weaned calf. Thus, fecal starch is a better tool for use in veal finishing rations.

Collecting samples for fecal starch analysis

Most commercial labs offer fecal starch analysis, either by NIRS or wet chemistry, within a \$20 to \$25 price range. NIRS tends to be more cost-effective than wet chemistry with quicker results. For the sake of accuracy, integrity in sample collection and submission is important. A few considerations for sample collection protocol include:

- Contact an accredited laboratory for detailed sample collection instructions and sample jars (do not use plastic sample bags!)
- Take multiple samples rather than a spot sample for a representative sample. Take at least five samples from different animals at random per pen to mix together, making a composite sample
- Samples obtained should be taken as freshly expelled manure. Look for cattle defecating and immediately take samples from fresh manure. Make sure the samples aren't contaminated by bedding or other substances since this can lead to inaccuracies in results
- Composite (mix) individual samples proportionally and freeze samples prior to sending to the lab

How do your fecal starch results stack up?

The objective of a feeding program is to optimize feed efficiency to reduce feed costs whilst maximizing gains in cattle. A high fecal starch result indicates lost opportunity and inefficiencies in feed utilization in finishing cattle. Fecal starch data was collected in 2021 on Ontario veal farms and was also collected in 2019 on Ontario feedlots; Table 1 provides the results from the Ontario benchmarking studies.



Figure 1
Fresh manure sample, free from bedding contamination, that can be used in a composite sample to measure fecal starch

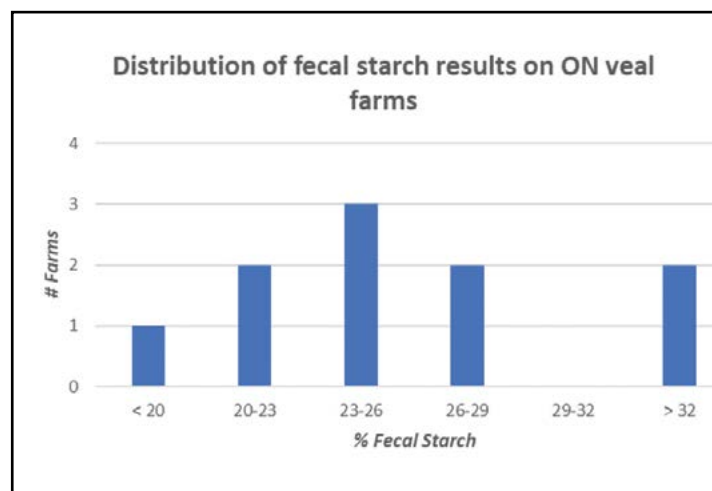


Figure 2
Distribution of fecal starch concentration based on pooled fecal samples from 10 commercial grain-fed veal finishing farms in Ontario (2021)

Table 1

Fecal Starch (% of fecal DM) results from Ontario veal finishing and beef feedlot benchmarking studies

	Fecal Starch (%)					Source
	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	
ON veal finishing rations	10	24.86	6.37	10.9	33.66	Van Schaik, 2021 (unpublished)
ON beef finishing rations	16	12	4.8	5.3	20.1	Wood, Van Schaik, and Conlin, 2019 (Virtual Beef)

*n represents the number of farms from which composited fecal samples were taken

What factors need to be considered when fecal starch is high for cattle fed corn-based diets

- Particle size distribution—A fecal starch evaluation can be used as an indicator of the impact of grain processing on total tract starch digestion when grain is the primary or only source of starch in the ration. Increased degree of processing is related to improved dry matter and starch digestibility. However, the extent of fines produced must be monitored to manage risk of reduced rumen pH and digestive upsets (e.g., bloat). This is particularly true for finishing veal rations that are comprised of corn and pellet supplements, where reducing particle size is not recommended in order to reduce risk of acidosis

- Corn vitreousness—Vitreousness describes the nature of the endosperm of the corn kernel. Increased vitreousness reduces starch digestibility and vitreousness varies depending on the corn hybrid and maturity. Ensiling and steam flaking reduce the impact of vitreousness on starch digestion
- Balance between protein and starch in the diet—Influences ability of microbes to use the energy provided

Fecal starch is a tool that can be used to monitor starch digestibility in cattle. Work with your nutritionist to discuss ration options and strategies to manage fecal starch. ■

References available upon request.

A future with full bottles

Heifers that have had bovine respiratory disease produce up to 525 kg less milk than their healthy counterparts in the first year of lactation.¹

Talk to your veterinarian about how vaccination with INFORCE 3[®] can prevent BRD.



Reference: 1. Dunn TR, Ollivett TL, Renaud DL, et al. 2018. The effect of lung consolidation, as determined by ultrasonography, on first-lactation milk production in Holstein dairy calves. *J Dairy Sci*;101(6):5404-5410.

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Options for the disposal of deadstock carcasses in Ontario

Dan Carlow P.Ag., Manager, Innovation, Engineering and Program Delivery Unit

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

The livestock sector in Ontario has earned a reputation for being proactive and good environmental stewards. Proper deadstock management will strengthen this trustworthy reputation.

The overarching rule

All deadstock must be disposed of within 48 hours of its death or immediately, if it begins to putrefy before 48 hours have passed.

There are several options for disposal of carcasses that meet regulatory requirements. See Ontario Regulation 106/09 Disposal of Dead Farm Animals for more information on all of the options and the specific requirements: bit.ly/DeadstockDisposal.

Some acceptable methods of disposal are:

- The use of a licensed deadstock collection service
- On-farm deadstock composting
- Deadstock disposal vessels
- On-farm burial of deadstock
- Biodigesters
- Incinerators

Collection

Deadstock is placed in bins that are picked up on the farm for smaller carcasses or left in a convenient spot out of public view for larger carcasses. Deadstock may also be delivered by the producer to a collector or to a common container, where deadstock from multiple farms is temporarily stored for pick-up. Common containers increase the efficiency of collection services.

The rules:

Store any deadstock awaiting pick-up so that it is concealed from public view (Figure 1), and so that any liquids from the animal cannot escape onto the ground. Not only does improper storage of dead farm animals result in complaints from the public, but it also attracts scavengers and predators and pose biosecurity risks for the farm. Make sure bins are not overloaded, lids are closed, and deadstock has not accidentally been

dropped on the ground beside the bin when emptying.

Figure 1 is a good example of proper bin placement from an Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) fact sheet called Deadstock Disposal Options for On-farm.

It is placed well away from the livestock barn, is relatively close to the road, the pad is large enough to allow the truck to turn easily; it is screened by trees or shrubs and well out of site of a passing motorist.



Figure 1

There are areas of the province where no collection service is offered so the following on-farm options are also acceptable methods of deadstock disposal.

Composting

Composting deadstock can work well if done properly.

Regulatory requirements for composting

The *Nutrient Management Act* specifies several requirements for on-farm

composting of deadstock. These include:

1. Use only the following materials as substrates for composting deadstock:
 - sawdust, shavings, or chips from clean, uncontaminated, untreated wood
 - straw from grain, corn, or beans
 - hay or silage
 - livestock bedding with at least 30 per cent dry matter and containing only allowable composting materials
 - poultry litter
2. The final mixture in the compost pile must not contain more than 25 per cent dead animals, and no less than 75 per cent substrate by volume.
3. Piles must be covered with at least 0.6 m (two ft) of substrate or a non-compostable, retractable covering that minimizes odours and prevents scavenging.
4. Composting must continue until there is no soft animal tissue left, no bone fragments greater than 15 cm (six in.), no other animal matter larger than 25 mm (one in.) and no offensive odour.
5. Compost systems may not be placed directly on organic soil or soil in hydrologic soil group categories AA or A. If placing the compost system directly on soil, there must be 0.9 m (three ft) of soil depth between the compost material and underlying bedrock/aquifers or the compost pile must be placed on an impervious pad. Compost piles cannot be placed on a flood plain.
6. A number of regulatory setback distances from compost piles also apply.

Here is a link to the complete fact sheet on bin composting: bit.ly/DeadstockBin.

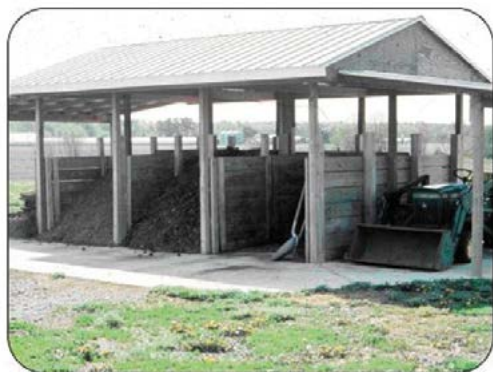


Figure 2
A well-designed and constructed three bin composting unit

Disposal vessels

A less thought of, but acceptable method of deadstock disposal involves the use of a disposal vessel. According to an OMAFRA fact sheet, a disposal vessel is a scavenger-proof, leak-proof container installed under, partially, or above ground, into which deadstock are placed to decompose. Figure 3 shows a steel disposal vessel.

Disposal vessels will work with any type or size of deadstock, but they make more sense for operations with dead farm animals that individually weigh up to about 75 kg (165 lbs.) in size, such as: sheep, goats, poultry, smaller swine, calves, and furbearing animals. The smaller carcass size allows these animals to decompose quickly.

Research (Fraser, 2009) demonstrated that a 10 m³ (353 ft³) disposal vessel (maximum size allowable under the new regulation) will ultimately hold at least 14,400 kg (31,680 lbs.) when deadstock are added at a reasonable rate, allowing ample time for decomposition to occur. In the research project, this rate was about 65 kg/week (143 lbs./week). At this rate, it would take over four years to fill a 10 m³ disposal vessel. If the weight of deadstock is expected to exceed 65 kg (143 lbs.)/week, consider either using more than one disposal vessel, filling them concurrently, or other disposal options, such as pick-up by a Licensed Dead Animal Collector. When the tank is filled, cap it off and install a new disposal vessel.

Here is a link to a fact sheet on disposal vessels: bit.ly/DeadstockVessels.



Figure 3
A vertical steel tank disposal vessel

On-farm burial

On-farm burial is an acceptable method, but careful consideration must be given to location.

Selecting the right sites for burying

Locating the burial site in the right place is critical for good carcass decomposition and protection of the environment. Generally, soil materials ranging from sandy loams to clays that are well-drained to imperfectly drained are suitable for burial. However, the regulation does not permit burial of deadstock in soils where there is a higher risk of polluting groundwater. These soils include organic soils (more commonly known as peat, muck, bog, or fen soil) soils considered hydrologic soil group AA, which have a combination of rapid infiltration rates (e.g., gravel) as well as a depth to the uppermost identified bedrock layer of less than 0.9 m (2.9 ft).

The regulations around burial list many setbacks, including minimum distance requirements to the nearest highway, lot line, surface water, well, drainage tile, and neighbor's residence, etc.

Ontario Regulation 106/09 limits the volume of deadstock in a burial pit to 2500 kg (5511 lbs.).

Here is a link to an on-farm burial fact sheet: bit.ly/BurialDeadstock.

In vessel composters



Figure 4
Novid In-Vessel Composter

This type of in-vessel composter can be relatively expensive to purchase but works well. It minimizes odours, is easy to operate and the composting process is quick and economical.

Incineration

Presently, there are very few incinerators used on farms in Ontario. Incinerators used for deadstock disposal must have a Verification Certificate issued by the Environmental Technology Verification Program (ETV Canada), certifying that it has a secondary chamber that is capable of maintaining the gases that enter it from the primary chamber at 1000°C or higher for at least one second, or 850°C or higher for at least two seconds. High temperatures in the secondary chamber will decrease the contaminants in the emissions.

When a dead farm animal is disposed of by incineration, a record must be kept of the temperatures in the incinerator combustion chambers at all times during the incineration process.



Figure 5
An example of a commercially available unit

Record of disposal

An operator who is required to dispose of a dead farm animal shall promptly make and keep a record of the animal's disposal, including:

- The species and age of the animal
- The weight of the animal immediately before disposal
- If known, the date and time of the animal's death and the cause of death
- The date and time of the animal's disposal, the method of disposal and the place of disposal
- The date on which the record is made

Summary

The livestock sector in Ontario has a proven track record of environmental sustainability and by following the regulations in the *Disposal of Dead Farm Animals Act* 106/09 described above, farm operators will continue to good stewards into the future. ■

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Veal management – At the heart of digestibility success

Lauren Yanch MSc., Technical and Operations Specialist

Grober Nutrition

Young calves are often challenged in their first days and weeks of life, and there are a variety of cofactors that can influence their success during this period. Young veal calves in particular are faced with challenges such as abomasal bloat and rumen drinking, where it can be difficult to determine the cause.

To combat these challenges, maintaining optimal management practices will be your best defense. However, some refinement is required in order to fully minimize these risks. The following will explore in detail the potential causes of these disorders and key management strategies to prevent onset, ultimately allowing for optimal veal performance and rearing success.

Abomasal bloat is often referred to as being multifactorial, in that there are many factors that can contribute to its onset, and it is most prevalent in young veal calves relative to other reared ruminants. Often, calves less than two weeks of age are most susceptible to experiencing abomastitis, and this can be symptomatically characterized by milk refusal, abdominal distention and/or death as short as six to 48 hours after onset. As such, it is crucial that mitigation is achieved as best as possible, otherwise the calf can continue to experience compromised health challenges, such as abomasal inflammation, infection, and ulcer development.

Research continues to explore potential causation in young veal calves, in hopes to minimize its impacts on-farm. Variability in results has led the causation to be defined as

multifactorial and not well understood. Current theories of causation investigate the high concentration of *Clostridium perfringens* within affected abomasums of young veal calves. Although this bacterial strain is naturally occurring within their internal environment, it is theorized that this bacterium increases with an increased feeding rate, particularly of easily digestible carbohydrates and protein.

As a result, the rate at which the abomasum empties declines while an excessive rate of fermentation occurs simultaneously, ultimately leading to an abundance of gas build-up within the abomasal cavity. What can often be a precursor to this relates to feeding frequency, size, and concentration, all of which can negatively contribute to a declined abomasal emptying rate if done improperly. Therefore, through means of management prophylaxis we can help to mitigate the onset of abomastitis by ensuring meals are fed in smaller volume and higher frequency, as well as ensuring the milk replacer is prepared according to the tag instructions.

It is also crucial to ensure that water is provided at all times and cleanliness of feeding equipment, such as esophageal tube feeders, is maintained in order to ensure environmental factors do not negatively influence their health status. These will all contribute towards minimizing any excessive fermentation in the animal, and therefore will continue to contribute to the avoidance of abomasal bloat until further substantial research can guide a more direct treatment.

Young veal calf management holds great importance for avoiding disorders where current uncertainties of causation and treatment remain. In its absence, it is not uncommon to see one issue lead to another, whereby meal frequency and rate of intake, in the case of abomastitis prevention, could also be a precursor towards ruminal drinking calves.

Rumen drinking is a result of esophageal groove failure, often caused by the type of feeding method (nipple versus bucket feeding) as well as meal size. When milk enters the rumen, nutrient uptake can be hindered, potentially causing digestive disturbances. Recent studies have shown that suckling behaviour is most optimal for esophageal groove functioning, thus allowing for proper flow of milk to the abomasum.

With both disorders discussed, the noteworthy importance of young veal calf nutritional management can truly be the centre of avoidance of digestive disorders in young ruminants. As such, the maintenance of consistent feeding and optimal meal size, concentration, cleanliness and form of delivery as well as provision of water can all contribute towards better security of healthy and successful veal cattle long term. ■

References available upon request.

FarmFood360° VR Experience

Four new Virtual Reality tours open doors to mushroom, veal, grain farms and research facilities



Canadians interested in learning more about how their food is produced have more opportunities available to them now at www.FarmFood360.ca. Four new Virtual Reality Tours, filmed throughout 2021 on mushroom, veal and grain farms – and research facilities operated by the University of Guelph – have been added to the popular website, joining the 18 farm and food processing tours already filmed and available for viewing.

The tours were developed by Farm & Food Care Ontario (FFCO) in partnership with Good in Every Grain, Mushrooms Canada, Ontario Genomics and Veal Farmers of Ontario.

Using 360 cameras and virtual reality technology, the award-winning *FarmFood360°* website gives Canadians the chance to tour real, working farms and food processing plants, all without putting on boots or biosecurity clothing.

The mushroom farm tour visits a family-owned facility growing four million pounds of mushrooms each year. Farm owner Murray Good partnered with FFCO and Mushrooms Canada for the project. Said Good, “For many people, mushrooms are rather mysterious. I’ve always enjoyed hosting tours, as people are incredibly fascinated to learn about how fresh local mushrooms are grown. Growing mushrooms is one part science and one part art! As with many other farms during this time, we haven’t been able to offer in-person tours, which is why I was thrilled by

the idea of hosting a virtual farm tour.”

The second tour takes people through the barns of an Ontario veal farm. In the tour, the farm family shows how their veal cattle are fed and cared for. Jennifer Haley, Executive Director of Veal Farmers of Ontario, said, “Veal farming has a long history and plays an important and fundamental role in Canada’s agricultural sector; however, the industry can be the subject of misconceptions and questions by our consumers.” She added, “We’re delighted to partner with FFCO to open the doors to an Ontario veal farm and answer those questions directly. Our farmers are proud of their farms and animal care standards and we’re eager to show that.”

A grain farm tour filmed in southwestern Ontario follows soybeans from planting through to harvest. “Grain farming in Ontario is challenging and rewarding. We are excited to work with FFCO to bring this project to fruition. Engaging video like this will help everyone feel like they are getting their boots on the ground and to see what happens in the fields of a soybean farm during spring planting, spraying and harvest; as well as all of the work that goes into making important crop care decisions,” said Victoria Berry, manager, communications at Grain Farmers of Ontario.

In an interesting shift from the more traditional farm and food processing tours on the site, Ontario Genomics partnered on a tour that highlights the exciting and emerging field of genomic research in agriculture. Through

a tour of a world class dairy research facility and interviews with research scientists at both Trent University and the University of Guelph, the project highlights research being done to increase food production, reduce stress on livestock thus improving animal welfare and improve the heartiness of crops like hazelnuts so that they can be grown in a cold Canadian climate.

Dr. Christine Baes, a dairy cow researcher at the University of Guelph who participated in the project said, “Genomics, which is the study of DNA, plays a key role in scientific discovery and technology innovation. As we’ve seen throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, it can also help address some of our most pressing challenges. In this video series we explore how genomics is being used to ensure Ontario and Canada have a secure food system for generations to come, while protecting our environment and constantly improving animal welfare.”

The project was also funded, in part, through the AgriCompetitiveness program of the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a federal, provincial, territorial initiative.

In 2021, the website received one million visitors. A new educator resource is in development by Agriculture in the Classroom Canada and will be live in February, 2022, providing curriculum-based classroom activities for each tour. ■

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Veal export opportunities



Kendra Keels

Industry Development Director

The Canadian Veal Association (CVA) is exploring the development of a veal export market. Over the last couple of years, the CVA has worked with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to develop *The Canadian Growth Enhancing Products-Free (GEPs-Free) Veal Certification Program*. This is a veal industry-driven initiative that is followed to comply with import requirements set by countries that do not allow the use of GEPs during the raising of animals destined for human consumption.

Veal production does not use GEPs, making it a perfect option to market outside of Canada and in particular Europe. This program will help to develop veal production beyond the domestic market, strengthening our industry.

Veal has always been a highly specialized product and the Canadian veal sector needs to capitalize on consumers beyond our borders, opening new and expanding markets. This potential growth will help our markets leading to more jobs and stability. It is time that Canada captures the global veal market share.

Many countries over the last few years prior to the pandemic had been experiencing high growth rates and a rise of the middle class. With the pandemic moving towards the end, now is the perfect time to grow our market outside of Canada.

There is an old saying not to have all your eggs in one basket and this could not be more accurate for veal. Developing this export market, especially overseas, will help to reduce the vulnerability we could experience here in Canada. As the economic condition changes it makes good business sense to be prepared.

As the veal industry works its way through this current crossroad some soul-searching needs to be done for the future of the sector. Is the export market what the Canadian veal industry wants to be part of? If so, as producers what are you willing to do to be part of the future?

To move forward with this project, producers need to show interest that this is the direction they want to go and be willing to make the necessary changes on-farm to make it happen. There is a bit of good faith to start laying the groundwork now to be prepared for when the federal plants are ready to start.

In Canada, there are two federal veal plants that could participate in the program. Like veal producers, the plants need to prepare as well. If the



plants go to the extra effort, they need to ensure there will be a veal supply that will fit the program. There needs to be effort on both sides.

The first step was developing the program but that is just the beginning, there is a lot of work that needs to be done to make it happen. As producers that means record-keeping as a start, age matters! The plants are working on their export requirements and if we all work on this together, we might make it happen.

Canada has an amazing veal product raised with the highest standards of care and welfare; we should be promoting Canadian veal around the world. If this is something your farm might be interested in participating with contact me at the VFO office to discuss. We are not ready to ship today but we need to lay the groundwork for the future.

To learn more about the veal export program visit: bit.ly/GEPsFree. ■



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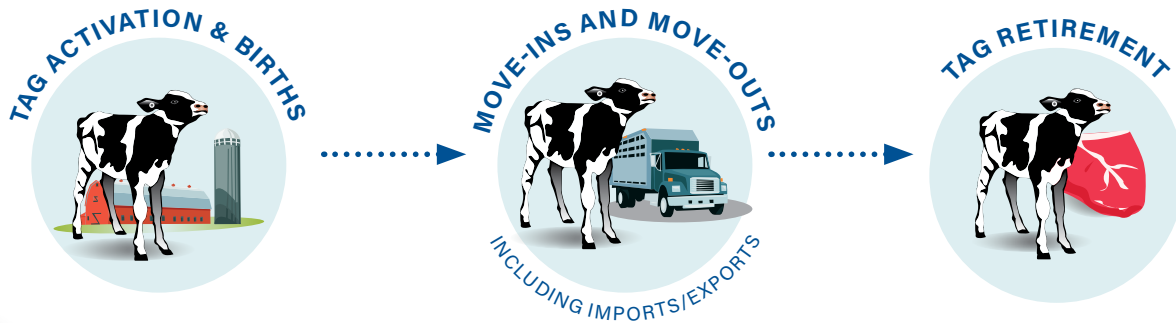
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Additional white tags can be purchased as part of the DairyTrace program at dairytrace.ca/traceability/animal-id/



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The impact of carbon pricing on veal farmers



Patrick MacCarthy

Projects and Policy Coordinator



Veal farmers are facing rising production costs throughout all aspects of their operation. One of these increasing costs is the Carbon Tax. By being informed of the costs and eligible exemptions of the Carbon Tax, veal farmers can work towards and lobby for reductions to these costs.

The federal *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act* (the Act) came into effect in April 2019. The Act sets out prices applied to fossil fuels (commonly referred to as carbon taxes or carbon pricing) based upon implied carbon emissions. Since Ontario does not have equivalent regulation, the province is subject to these federal regulations. While certain exemptions apply to the Act, much of the energy used on Ontario veal farms is subject to carbon taxes. Therefore, the Carbon Tax can be expected to generate three main effects on Ontario farmers.

Grain drying

Farmers will face an explicit cost in terms of increased costs of natural gas and propane. The increased cost is evident in the cost of grain drying. In 2021, it is expected that the Carbon Tax will increase the cost of drying corn by **\$5.68/acre**. This will increase to \$24.15/acre in 2030. If veal farmers purchase their corn, this cost will be passed on to them through higher feed prices. In the 2021 Fall Economic Statement, the federal government announced the creation of a tax credit for 20 per cent of eligible grain drying costs. No further details or timelines for implementation have been given.

Heating

Propane and natural gas used to heat barns and workshops are also subject to the carbon price. For an average Ontario dairy farm in 2021 (used as a proxy due to the similar barn style, as the variety of veal operations makes creating a standard challenging) the increased cost from the Carbon Tax will be approximately **\$500/year**.

Input costs

Finally, other members of the veal supply chain (input providers, transporters, processors) will face increased costs due to carbon pricing, and it is reasonable to expect that these costs will be passed on to veal

producers. For example, the fuel used in the transportation of veal cattle to and from farms is not exempt. It is reasonable to assume that veal farmers will have to pay higher transportation costs because of the Carbon Tax. Farmers will also face increases in prices of other items in which the carbon price is embedded and passed on (for example, nitrogen fertilizers, potash, lime, cement, etc.).

Exemptions

Ontario farmers are eligible to receive an exemption from the fuel charge (Carbon Tax) for fuels (gasoline and light fuel oil) used in tractors, trucks, or other farm machinery, by completing an exemption form available through Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).

Veal farmers can access the form here: bit.ly/FuelChargeExemption.

Once completed, give the original to your fuel supplier—this will allow them to remove the Carbon Tax from fuel delivered to your farm. Be sure to keep a copy for your records and review your fuel bill yearly to ensure that the Carbon Tax is not applied to your fuel deliveries.

Note that electricity prices in Ontario are not affected by carbon pricing as Ontario's energy mix is principally nuclear and hydroelectric.

Credits

All individuals in Ontario are eligible to receive a Climate Action Incentive rebate to offset part of the cost of the federal Carbon Tax. Claimed through your income tax, this rebate of \$360 for a single person or \$540 for a couple will be paid quarterly. However, there are no additional credits available to small businesses in Ontario such as veal farmers.

Furthermore, it is unclear whether or how the federal government is prepared to assess levies or tariffs on agri-food imports from elsewhere that do not meet Canadian emission standards, potentially undermining Canadian agri-food competitiveness. Finally, the prospect of incentives for carbon sequestration or for agriculture to provide carbon offsets has not yet been articulated.

The prospective cost burden of the federal carbon price is a concern for Ontario farmers. Farmers are largely unable to pass on cost increases in

the form of higher prices received for farm products; moreover, as price takers, they are subject to higher prices passed on to them associated with the carbon price. Costs associated with the carbon price deplete the budgets for farm investments, including investments in productivity enhancement and energy savings. Overall, the cost of the carbon price in 2021 represents about six per cent (\$70.2 million) of the 2016 to 2020 average Ontario net farm income. By 2030 the cost burden is expected to be about 18 per cent of the 2016 to 2020 average Ontario net farm income. The cumulative impact of the Carbon Tax increases over the next nine years are not supportable and may threaten farm sustainability in Ontario. ■

Federal Carbon Pricing in Ontario

Product	As of April 1st, 2022	2030 Cost
CO ₂	\$50/tonne	\$170/tonne
Natural Gas	9.8¢/m ³	33.3¢/m ³
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References available upon request.

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Farm & Food Care Ontario Year in review

Amber Anderson, Communications Manager

Farm & Food Care Ontario



Farm & Food Care Ontario (FFCO) appreciates the continued support of silver members, including Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO), which enables the organization to continue the important work of building public trust in Ontario agriculture.

With the ongoing COVID-19 realities of 2021, FFCO continued to reimagine many of its traditional outreach programs and create new opportunities to engage with consumers both online and through in-person events with pandemic protocols in place. With large followings on social media and strong website platforms, FFCO is able to continue its outreach programming, making 2021 a remarkably successful year, despite the complicated circumstances.

Training and workshops

FFCO supports member groups, farmers, and the broader agricultural industry through a variety of speaker services and training. In 2021, this

included 36 presentations and 12 virtual Speak Up and media training courses, including one for VFO directors, designed to help participants effectively engage with the public or media.

Other virtual training sessions focused on animal activist-related issues and providing advice on how to protect farm properties from unwanted visitors. FFCO continues to support its members on issues related to animal activism and, in 2021, created Animal Protection Zone signage on behalf of its livestock members for distribution across the province.

Six virtual training courses focusing on responses to livestock emergencies including truck rollovers were held for 60 first responders both in northern Ontario and across Southwestern Ontario. These courses are run by FFCO staff in partnership with Victor MacPherson, a livestock responder with significant expertise in this area. The course covers factors that are important to the decision-making processes for accidents involving livestock trailers, including trailer design and the implications for extrication points, animal behavior, laws and regulations, euthanasia protocols, and how to develop response teams.

FarmFood360°

With teachers and students continuing online learning in 2021 and agricultural organizations seeking to connect with consumers virtually, FarmFood360.ca welcomed a million visitors to 22 farms and food processing facilities in 2021.

In January 2022, a new veal farm 360 tour joined the roster, produced in the summer of 2021 in partnership with VFO. In February of 2022, a new educator resource will be available on the website to accommodate requests from many teachers across Canada wondering how they can use the virtual reality site in their classroom teachings.

The Real Dirt on Farming

The fifth edition of *The Real Dirt on Farming* received several industry communications awards in 2021. From the Canadian Agricultural Marketing Awards (CAMA), the publication received a Best of CAMA in the category of Company or Industry-Funded Marketing Tactic Directed at the General Public. It was also recognized with two prestigious Gold awards presented by the Canadian Farm Writers' Federation (CFWF).

A supplementary Teachers' Guide created in partnership with Agriculture in the Classroom Canada (AITC) was distributed in 2021 to AITC partner groups across Canada.



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In addition, the magazine has been shared with Ontario MPPs and municipal leaders, MPs and Senators from across the country, and was distributed through 211,000 Post Media newspapers to homes across the country.

Breakfast From the Farm

Working with partners at the Ottawa Valley Seed Growers and Carp Fair, the Lindsay Exhibition and the Western Fair District in London, three drive-through Breakfast on the Farm events gave 1000 carloads of families the chance to meet Ontario farmers and see livestock, crop and equipment displays up close. At the end of each event, they received a breakfast bag full of local Ontario products to make their own breakfasts at home.

Virtual Food & Nutrition Forum

FFCO again used the virtual space to connect with its target audience of food influencers. Working with Farm & Food Care offices in Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island, the groups hosted three winter webinars on topics related to food labelling, COVID's effect on food service and international food trends. In November, FFCO again partnered with the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair to host a virtual version of the annual Food & Nutrition Forum and connect with 215 attendees from the same target audience.

Virtual food & farm field trips

FFCO and AgScape continued a successful partnership 2021, offering a series of 26 livestreamed farm tours which reached a staggering audience of 269,000. These field trips gave viewers, including students and teachers, the opportunity to connect with farmers in real-time. FFCO and AgScape will continue to offer these tours throughout 2022 and are looking for farmers interested in hosting them.

Faces Behind Food

Faces Behind Food continues to highlight the diversity of people and career opportunities within the Canadian agri-food system. A total of 104 people were profiled in 2021 including several butchers working at Ontario retail stores and an Ontario veal farmer.

Farm Animal Care Helpline

The Farm Animal Care Helpline is a confidential service that allows concerned farmers and community members to report situations where they feel farm animals require better care, or where farmers themselves can call should they require help. FFCO received 13 calls in 2021, and worked with farmers, experienced staff, and commodity groups to investigate reports. The helpline is operated in partnership with all major commodity organizations.

To learn more about all of FFCO's initiatives, visit FarmFoodCareON.org and subscribe to the monthly e-newsletter. Comments and questions can always be directed to FFCO staff directly at info@farmfoodcare.org. ■

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¹ Savard C, and Borge A. Bovine respiratory pathogen survey in 2019. *Bovine Animal Health* (2020) Available at: <https://www.merck-animal-health.ca/bovine-respiratory-pathogen-survey-2019> (Accessed November 2021)
² Savard C, Borge A, Borge A, et al. Bovine respiratory pathogen survey in 2019. *Bovine Animal Health* (2020) Available at: <https://www.merck-animal-health.ca/bovine-respiratory-pathogen-survey-2019> (Accessed November 2021)
DOI: 10.1007/s10066-020-00102-0
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Animal Health

Knowing your financial ratios

Part 2

Erich Weber, CPA, Business Finance Specialist

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

In the winter edition of *The Connection*, we examined some of the financial ratios that you, as a farmer, would use to determine how well your farm business is performing. Your lender or investors want to know how your farm is performing and ensure you can make payments and have the ability to incur more debt if necessary. Today we look at some of the financial ratios that your lender could use in their analysis of your farm.

Financial ratios are great tools but can provide a limited view of your farm business. When assessing your farm business, it is important to look at financial ratio analysis rather than one single measure. Most lenders and investors would use other tools to complete their analysis of your farm, in addition to financial ratios. Other tools may include:

- Farm visit to gain a better understanding of how your farm is maintained and how it may grow
- Credit checks to see how well your farm is at managing its credit
- Reference checks to gain insight as to how well your farm is viewed in the industry
- Appraisals of major assets to ensure there is enough collateral for the lender or investor

Understanding this and within this context, here are some common financial ratio calculations.

Debt to equity ratio

$$\text{Debt to equity ratio} = \frac{\text{Total liabilities (in dollars)}}{\text{Total equity (in dollars)}}$$

A debt to equity ratio is a quick way to see how much your farm business is leveraged. A higher debt to equity calculation means your business is leveraged more, compared to a farm business with a lower debt to equity ratio. Lenders and investors could be concerned if you have a debt to equity ratio of one or more (i.e., 1:1), as there is a higher risk you may not have enough equity to pay off outstanding debt. Your business may have difficulty obtaining more credit if your debt to equity ratio is too high. Lenders will also take into consideration the debt to equity result and the stage of your farm business (i.e., a new farm will have a higher debt to equity compared to an established farm that has been in operation for a number of years).

Debt servicing ratio or debt service coverage ratio

$$\text{Debt servicing ratio} = \frac{\text{Net income} + \text{Interest} + \text{Depreciation} + \text{Amortization (in dollars)}}{\text{Interest} + \text{Principal (in dollars)}}$$

The debt servicing ratio (also called debt service coverage ratio) is a tool that outlines how much cash flow your business must make to meet your annual debt payments. If you have a debt servicing ratio of one (e.g., 1:1), then your business makes just enough money to meet your annual debt payments. If your debt servicing ratio is less than one (e.g., 0.9:1), then your business does not make enough money to meet your debt payments. Lenders and investors want to see your farm business have a debt servicing ratio of greater than one. This indicates your business can meet all debt payments and has extra cash flow that can be used to reinvest in the business.

Current ratio

$$\text{Current ratio} = \frac{\text{Current assets (in dollars)}}{\text{Current liabilities (in dollars)}}$$

This ratio looks at how well your farm business is able to meet its current liabilities (e.g., credit card debt, line of credit, accounts payable, etc.) using your current assets (e.g., cash, non-breeding livestock, accounts receivable, etc.). The current ratio is a good tool to determine how well your farm business is able to weather any financial issues. If your current ratio is below one, then your farm business does not have enough current assets to meet your current liability obligations. Your lender or investors needs to see your current ratio greater than one (e.g., 1.01:1). This tells them that you have more current assets than current liabilities.

Return on equity

$$\text{Return on equity \%} = \frac{\text{Net income} - \text{Interest} - \text{Taxes (in dollars)}}{\text{Owner equity (in dollars)}} \times 100$$

This ratio provides a measure of the return to the owner or shareholder on their investment (equity) in the business. A high return on equity (ROE) percentage would indicate your business is generating good return on the owner's investment compared to a low ROE. A low or negative ROE percent-



age can indicate that your farm business is not fully utilizing its equity and possibly reducing the owner's equity in the farm.

Examining how well your business is performing is an important task that your lender and investors do on a regular basis. Using financial ratios are one tool lenders and investors will use to examine your farm business. In this article, we looked at some of the common financial ratios that can be used to assess your farm business. This is not an exhaustive list. Some financial ratios that you, as a farmer, may use to assess your business, included in the winter edition of *The Connection*, may be used by lenders and investors to help with analysis. Having good communication is essential to having a successful working relationship when working with lenders or investors. ■

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1. Mosher, R. A., Coetzee, J. F., Cull, C. A., Gehring, R., KuKanich, B. (2011) Pharmacokinetics of oral meloxicam in ruminant and pre-ruminant calves. *J. Vet. Pharmacol. Therap.* 35, 373-381. 2. K. A. Allen, J. F. Coetzee, L. N. Edwards-Callaway, H. Glynn, J. Dockweiler, B. KuKanich, H. Lin, C. Wang, E. Fraccaro, M. Jones and L. Bergamasco. (2013) The effect of timing of oral meloxicam administration on physiological responses in calves after cauter dehoring with local anesthesia. *J. Dairy Sci.* 96:5194-5205 <http://dx.doi.org/10.3168/jds.2012-6251>. 3. Olson et al. Efficacy of oral meloxicam suspension for prevention of pain and inflammation following band and surgical castration in calves. *BMC Veterinary Research* (2016) 12:102 Oral Meloxicam provided Pain control (behavioral and physiological) for band or knife castration for 72 hours. 4. Daniel Shock, Steven Roche and Merle Olson (2019) Comparative Pharmacokinetic Analysis of Oral and Subcutaneous Meloxicam Administered to Postpartum Dairy Cows. *Vet. Sci.* 2019, 6, 73; doi:10.3390/vetsci6030073. 5. Shock, D., Roche, S., Nagel, D. and Olson, M. (2020) The Effect of Delivery Method on the Pharmacokinetic Properties of Meloxicam in Pre-Weaned Dairy Calves with Diarrhea. *Open Journal of Veterinary Medicine*, 10, 27-38. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojvm.2020.103003>. 6. Coetzee, J.F., KuKanich, S.B., Mosher, R.A. & Allen, P.S. (2009) Pharmacokinetics of intravenous and oral meloxicam in ruminant cattle. *Veterinary Therapeutics*, 10, E1-E8. 7. Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica GmbH 55216 Ingelheim/Rhein, Germany http://www.zds-bonn.de/services/files/tierschutz/anx_72555_en.pdf ANNEX I SUMMARY OF PRODUCT.

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INDUSTRY

updates



A brand-new look for vealfarmers.ca

Along with the same great content producers and industry partners have come to expect, Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) is pleased to share that the vealfarmers.ca website now has a fresh new look and improved functionality.

Find relevant and timely information for Ontario grain-fed veal producers on management and markets, upcoming events, and links to additional resources on our website.

Quebec licence fee change

VFO has been advised by the Canadian Beef Check-Off Agency that as of January 1, 2022, the check-off payable by Quebec sellers has been updated. As such, purchasers and dealers in Ontario are now required to deduct and remit amended levies on bob calves sold by Quebec sellers in Ontario. For bob calves/male dairy calves from Quebec sellers, the rate as of January 1, 2022, is now \$6.25/head.

Licence fees/check-off are to be paid and remitted to VFO for the province they are sold in (Ontario) and at the rate of the province the calves were born in.

Health of Animals Regulations Part XII (Transport of Animals) enforcement update

On February 20, 2020, the Health of Animals Regulations Part XII (Transport of Animals) amendments came into effect. At that time, a two-year phase-in period was initiated by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). The phase-in period ended on February 20, 2022.

With transport research underway throughout Canada that is relevant to the transport times of ruminants nine days of age and older, the CFIA does not plan to prioritize enforcement where the maximum intervals without feed, water, and

rest (FWR) are exceeded by less than four hours, provided all animal welfare outcomes are being met.

More resources, including VFO's customized Animal Transfer Record, are available on our website.

The Evaluating the health and growth impact of transport on male dairy calves project

VFO is funding research by the University of Guelph's Dr. Dave Renaud to evaluate the impact of commingling and short and long-distance transport on behavioural, metabolic, and clinical indicators of health as well as growth in male dairy calves. This project will be complete in 2023. VFO is supporting this research with the hope that understanding the challenges young male dairy calves arriving to veal facilities experience can help dairy and veal producers work together to mitigate their effects and make the transition less stressful.

Celebrating Canada's Agriculture Day

On February 22, 2022, VFO celebrated Canada's Agriculture Day by taking part in the #TacoBoutAg challenge with our commodity group partners, encouraging our followers to fill their plates with local ingredients for their taco creations and share photos on social media. VFO shared Chef Ted Reader's Ontario Veal Street Tacos recipe for inspiration. Canada's Agriculture Day celebrates each member of the agri-food supply chain that works hard to ensure Canadian plates remain full of local, nutritious food.

The online classroom resource to accompany the grain-fed veal FarmFood360° video was

also released by Farm & Food Care and Agriculture in the Classroom Canada as part of the celebrations.

New virtual speaker series recordings available throughout April



During the month of March VFO held a series of webinars connecting busy producers with leading experts on young calf, veal cattle and business management. Recordings of the live talks from the 2022 Ask the Expert Virtual Speaker Series will be released weekly in April. Sign-up for our weekly e-blast by contacting info@vealfarmers.ca to be the first to know when the links will be made available.

Dairy Code update

Thank you to everyone who offered helpful feedback on the draft dairy cattle Code of Practice. 5,884 respondents completed a submission on the draft Code, making this the most commented on Code of Practice in NFACC's history. Additionally, 50 organizational submissions (e.g., on behalf of an association, ministry, council) were received. In total, this Code received about 45,470 actual comments.

The majority of responses came from Quebec (48.7%), with British Columbia (19.5%), and Ontario (12.6%) rounding out the top three residences of respondents. Dairy farmers in particular made their voices heard. 40% of respondents identified as dairy farmers, with 31% identifying as concerned citizens/animal welfare advocates, and 27% identifying as consumers. Of the seven chapters, housing received the most comments especially the sections on lactating and dry cow



housing, calf housing, and calving areas.

A series of meetings have already been scheduled in March through June so the Code Committee can begin reviewing and discussing the feedback.

Learn more at bit.ly/dairyupdate.

Transport Code update

The Code Development Committee (CDC) is expected to commence reviewing the work of its sub-committees during the first quarter of 2022. When the CDC review is close to completion, the next step will be to reactivate the species-specific working groups (WG) so that those groups can supplement all common content with animal-specific content.

The Intermediary Sites WG has had 15 virtual meetings since January 2021. The WG is composed of three diverse sectors (assembly facilities; sales yards/auctions; feed/water/rest stations) and covers a wide variety of species. To date, the group has developed a rough draft

for most topics for their section and continues to work diligently through the remaining issues.

Learn more at bit.ly/transportcode.

VFO participates in summit on food security

VFO was pleased to participate in the virtual Ontario Food Summit hosted by the Honourable Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, in early March. It is increasingly important that we all work together to strengthen Ontario's agri-food sector, and this was an excellent opportunity to discuss ideas and collaborate on strategies that will make our industry even more resilient.

VFO applauds investment to improve veterinary access for Ontario livestock farmers

Access to veterinary care is a priority for all livestock farmers. VFO applauds January's joint announcement of an investment of up to

\$4 million dollars through the Livestock Veterinary Innovation Initiative, which provides cost-share funding to improve virtual care options, expand telemedicine access and address issues with mobile clinics.

VFO thanks the Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Canada's Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, and the Honourable Lisa Thompson, Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, for their support. The health and well-being of our animals is always a top priority and ensuring all farmers have access to large animal veterinarians, regardless of their location in the province, is of critical importance.

VFO has been engaged with our industry partners to address this fundamental issue and is pleased to see positive outcomes like this joint announcement. This funding will help bridge the gap – especially for those farmers in remote, underserved areas – and better support animal health, the livestock agri-food sector and the strength of the province's food supply. ■

OFA labour project offers updated training for new workers

Michelle deNijs, Communications Specialist

Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Considering hiring for the 2022 growing season? While local labour has been challenging to source throughout the pandemic and prior, employers should consider welcoming workers new to the industry. Resources have been created through the Feeding Your Future project to help address labour challenges and support engaging with workers new to agriculture.

In partnership with the University of Guelph Ridgetown Campus, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) has developed a training program specifically for workers new to the sector or for those in need of a refresher course. The Ontario Agriculture Worker Safety and Awareness Certificate is an introductory training course filled with basic safety concepts that apply to Ontario farms and agri-businesses.

This online certificate creates the opportunity for new workers to understand hazards and

basic information about different types of agricultural operations. The course provides a broad overview of health and safety on a farm, an introduction to farm equipment operation and safety, and an introduction to both livestock and crop farm operations.

On January 31, 2022, this program re-launched with the addition of updates and enhancements to increase relevance of safety information in the farm workplace. Additionally, two new modules have been released to expand the coverage of this certificate course across nine interactive modules.

A module focused on Mental Wellness in Agriculture was developed to identify the unique barriers the agricultural population experiences relative to mental health. Expanding awareness of mental wellness in an agricultural workplace and providing resources to get help

is extremely important for new workers. Hand Tool Safety was added as the final module, covering basic safety and awareness of types of hand and power tools and specific hazards to avoid. More information and registration for this course can be found on our website, in addition to a detailed course syllabus.

Keeping a strong and reliable food system is even more critical during COVID-19. If you are looking for workers or employment opportunities, take advantage of the job matching service, webinars, virtual career fairs and training opportunities during the pandemic and beyond, developed in partnership with AgCareers.com. For more information about these services, please visit the website at feedingyourfuture.ca. ■

This project is funded through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a five-year federal-provincial-territorial initiative.

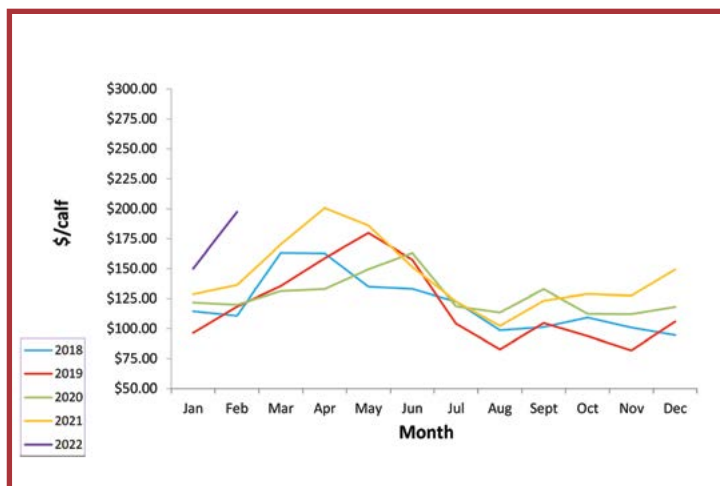




Veal Market Information

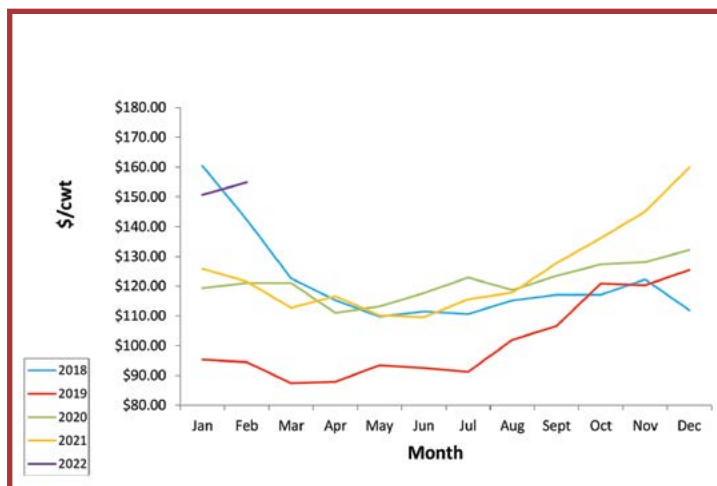
This information is collected from various sources and disseminated by Veal Farmers of Ontario.

Bob Calf Pricing



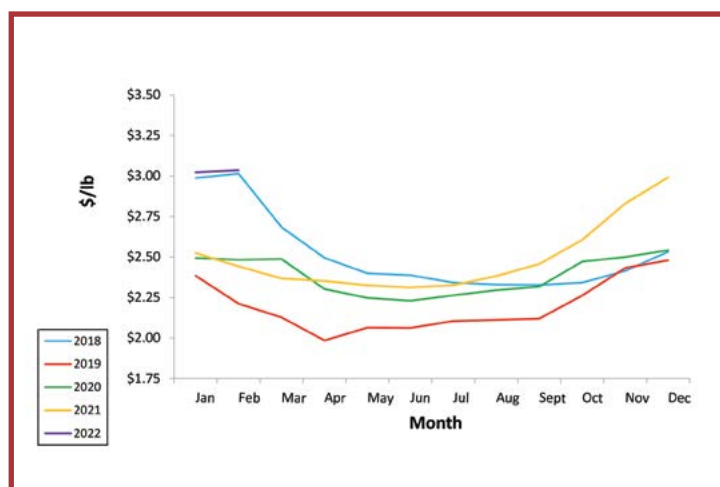
This price range is collected and tabulated from participating sale barns throughout Ontario based on average pricing. This information is used to follow trends.

Sale Barn Veal Pricing



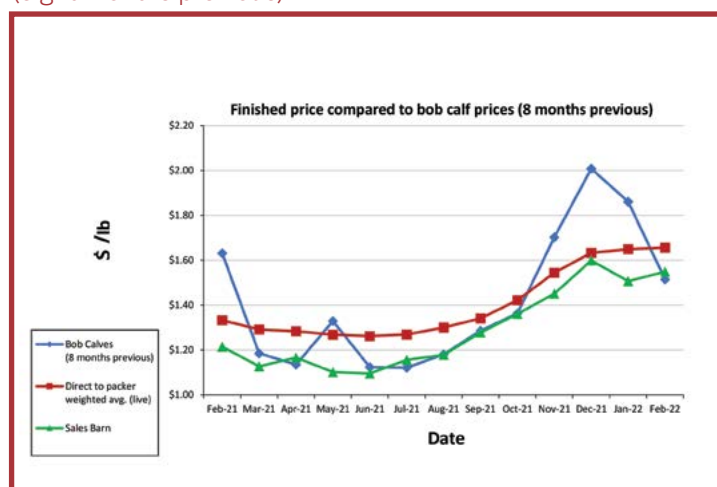
This price range is collected and tabulated from participating sale barns throughout Ontario based on average pricing. This information is used to follow trends.

Rail Grade Veal Pricing

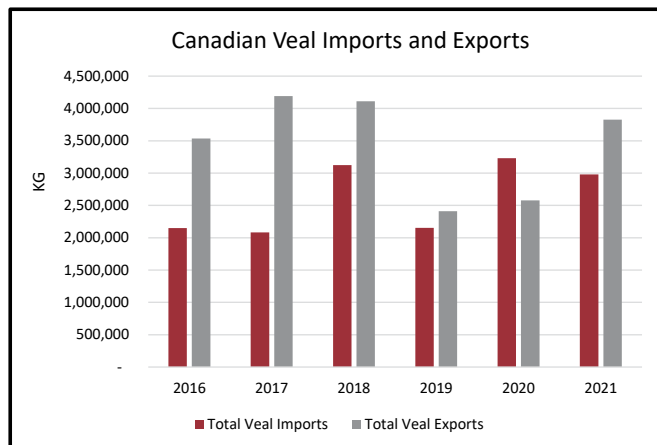


This information is collected from producer contributions on a weekly basis. Once the numbers are collected a weighted average is calculated. The weighted average gives a more realistic price of what is happening in the market. This information is used to follow trends.

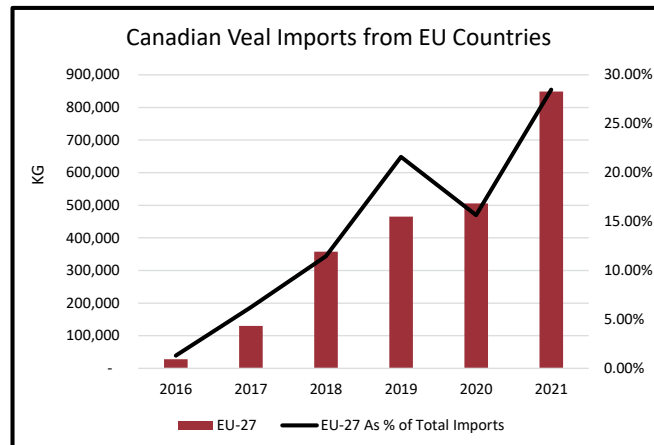
Finished price compared to bob calf prices (eight months previous)



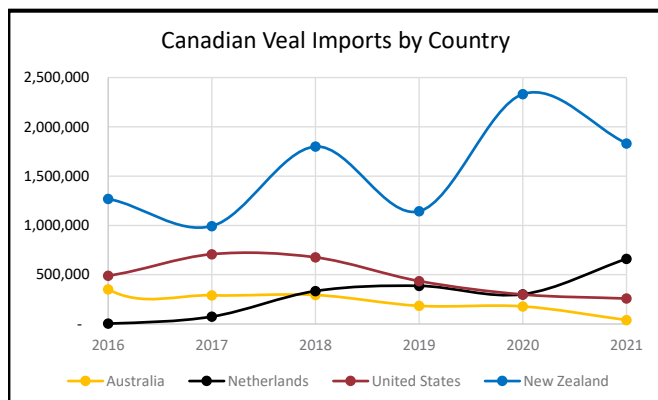
This graph is used to compare the finished price from both the sale barn and rail grade pricing to the bob calf prices eight months prior. This information could help when deciding on the purchase prices of calves and what market they will be shipped in. This information gives a quick glance at both bob calf pricing and finished veal pricing.



Canada's veal trade showed positive growth in 2021, with exports increasing as pandemic restrictions lift. Canadian veal exports amounted to 3.8 million Kgs, a year over year increase of 50% by volume and 54% by value. Conversely, veal imports decreased by 7% in volume and value compared to 2020, with import volumes amounting to approx. 3 million Kgs.



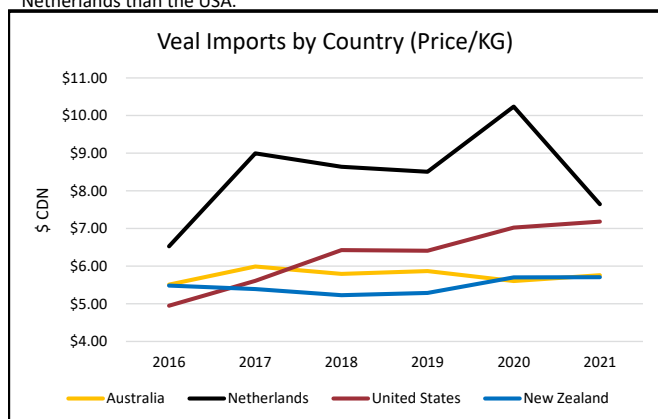
The volume of veal imports from the EU (red) is up 102%, to nearly 850,000 Kgs. This is equivalent to 29% of Canada's veal imports (black line); a concerning increase especially considering that these imports are higher value muscle cuts. The Netherlands is the largest supplier of European imports along with Italy.



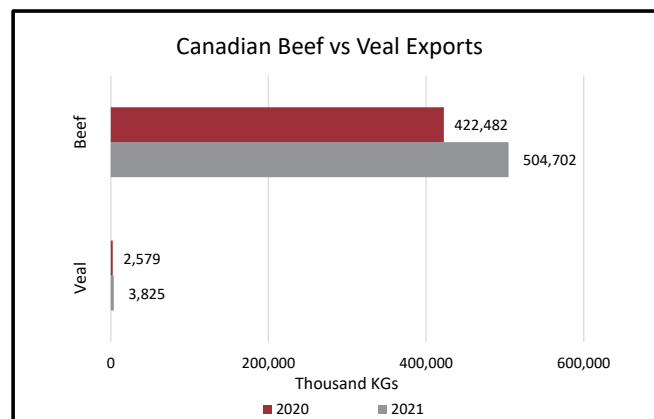
Most of Canada's veal imports continue to originate from New Zealand. Imports from the Netherlands continued their increasing trend, while imports from the USA have declined. Few Australian imports have been reported. More than double the veal is now imported from the Netherlands than the USA.



Veal exports to the USA increased by 49% compared to 2020. This is the highest amount of veal exports since 2018. The remainder of Canada's veal exports are sent to the Middle East.



The per Kg price of veal imported from the Netherlands has declined significantly in 2021 (from \$10.24 to \$7.65/Kg), though still the highest of any country. The value of American cuts remains at higher levels in 2021 (\$7.18/Kg), while the value of Australian and New Zealand imports held steady (\$5.75/Kg).



While veal represents just a small fraction of Canada's red meat trade, both veal and beef exports have increased considerably in 2021.

Data retrieved from AAFC and Statistics Canada, red meat section.

Ontario VEAL appeal

Ontario Veal Parmigiana

Cut: Scaloppini/Cutlets

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup (125 mL) bread crumbs
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 lb (500 g) Ontario veal scaloppini or cutlets
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) flour, seasoned with salt and pepper to taste
- 1 egg, beaten
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) oil
- 1 cup (250 mL) spaghetti or tomato sauce
- pinch each, dried thyme and cayenne
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) grated mozzarella cheese

Instructions:

Combine bread crumbs and Parmesan cheese. Using a meat mallet, pound veal slices between two pieces of plastic wrap to flatten. Coat veal slices in seasoned flour; then beaten egg; then bread crumbs/Parmesan mixture.

In a non-stick skillet, over medium high heat, heat oil. Add veal, sauté veal slices 3 to 4 minutes per side, until browned and veal is cooked through. Do not overcook. Remove to serving dish to keep warm. Repeat with remaining slices of veal. Add tomato sauce to skillet with thyme and cayenne and heat to boiling. Simmer 5 minutes and serve over veal slices, sprinkling tops with mozzarella cheese, if desired. ■

Makes 4 servings.

Source: www.ontariovealappeal.ca

Nutrition Information: 403 Calories, 34 grams Protein, 17 grams Fat, 25 grams Carbohydrate

Tip: Ontario veal on a bun is a tasty alternative. Grill your favourite mix of vegetables and season to taste. Layer vegetables and veal parmigiana on a fresh bakery bun and enjoy!



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Licenced dealers

As a veal (bob calves, started/preconditioned calves, and finished veal cattle) producer, you should be dealing with licenced dealers who are remitting veal licence fees (check-off) on behalf of the farmers they are collecting from. If you are selling bob calves from your dairy farm, the \$5.50 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. Please contact the Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) office to ensure we have your updated contact information, including your email address. If you are dealing with an unlicensed dealer, you are not protected under the Ontario Beef Cattle Financial Protection Program (OBCFPP). 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 licenced, ask to see the licence, check the Agricorn website at bit.ly/Agricorndealers or contact the VFO office.

Licence fee reminders

In order to save producers time doing paperwork for their male dairy bob calf (up to 150 pounds) and preconditioned intact male dairy calf (up to 450 pounds) purchases from private treaty or dealer sales, VFO has a Year End Licence Fee Remittance Worksheet available to assist in calculating monthly remittances from January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2022. 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 are received and to forward the licence fees to the local board. Bob calves and preconditioned calves are considered veal cattle. If you have not already sent in Form 1 identifying yourself as a veal producer, please do so. They can be emailed, faxed, or sent by regular mail to the office. If you require additional copies of the Year End Licence Fee Remittance Worksheet, Form 1, or Form 5, please visit bit.ly/LicForms or contact the VFO office.

Ontario Beef Cattle Financial Protection Program

Agricorn is the Delivery Agent of the OBCFPP and Administrator for the Livestock Financial Protection Board. All communication, including but not limited to: Late Payments Reports, Claims to the Fund, and Licencing inquiries, must be directed to Agricorn. Visit bit.ly/agricorp or call 1-888-247-4999 for more information. ■

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