

THE Connection

Summer 2023 Volume 5, No. 2

VEAL
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Chair's MESSAGE



Phil Kroesbergen

Strengthening our collective voice with industry partnerships

My first column as Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) Chair and while it has only been a few months since coming on board as Chair, it seems that there has been a lot going on since our Annual General Meeting in March. Thank you to my fellow board members for your support in electing me as your Chair. I am passionate about the Ontario veal industry and its future having spent all my life raising veal cattle with my family. I look forward to contributing to the VFO and to the dairy calf and veal sectors in the year ahead.

First off, I would like to thank past Chair Pascal Bouilly for all of his contributions to VFO over the years as both a Director and Chair. Pascal led VFO on a number of important issues over his term and was a passionate defender of the veal sector. Pascal also served as a director with our legacy organization, Ontario Veal Association, and has spent his career working in the dairy calf sector. We will certainly miss Pascal's presence, but we also know he is not too far away to get his help when needed.

VFO partnered with a number of organizations to stand up for our farmland and the encroaching urban developments by joining on to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture's joint statement regarding the proposed Provincial Planning Statement and the newly created Bill 97. As a result of industry's joint statement, agriculture stood together to protect our farmland for not only today but for the next generation as well. While we all would agree that we need more housing here in Ontario, it needs to be built in already designated urban centers without expropriating some of the most productive farmland we have available to grow food. As a young farmer myself, I look to the future, and I am concerned about land values and how the next generation will be able to afford to farm. Standing together strengthens our collective voice and VFO was pleased to see the overwhelming support for this important issue.

There have also been a flurry of other government consultations and amendments to legislation that the provincial government was trying to complete before they rose for the summer break. VFO participated in the consultation process for amendments to the *Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act* (PAWS) which focused on clarifying the role and powers of an inspector and on improving cost recovery procedures. However, the livestock industry has long been asking the Solicitor General's office for a meeting to review inspector training and education specific to animal

agriculture and normal animal husbandry practices, and VFO will continue to be part of this industry group moving forward.

VFO has also commented on changes and updates to the Beef Cattle Financial Protection Program and to the federal posting regarding amendments to the livestock traceability requirements. As well, VFO submitted comments to the proposed amendments for the *Veterinarians Act* where we outlined our concern about ensuring livestock farmers have the ability to continue treating animals using practices that may also be done by a veterinarian or a veterinary technician. Veal farmers, like our livestock sector partners, work closely with our herd veterinarians and as a result provide important animal health care for our livestock.

With the changes to our workflow at VFO, and as a result of changes we have made using technology and our meeting time, VFO has made the decision to downsize our office space and will be moving into shared office space with our sheep, beef, and meat processor partners. This will provide enhanced opportunities for collaboration as well. Perhaps this is a silver lining coming out of the pandemic and VFO is pleased to find these efficiencies for the organization without impacting any workflow or services to members. The costs saved on downsizing can then be put into additional consumer promotions, research, and producer programs to support our sector. Please make sure to update your address for VFO.

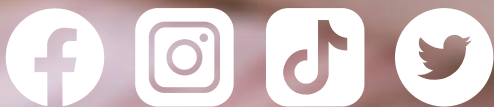
As we look to the summer ahead, I hope that you will have some time to enjoy with your family and friends and take a break from the everyday stresses that farming brings. It won't be long before the fall harvest season will be upon us again. Until the next issue, if you have any questions, concerns or would like to discuss anything please do not hesitate to reach out to any of your Board members.

P.S. VFO will be at the Outdoor Farm Show in September – stop by and see us in the TD Dairy Producer Pavilion, we are in booth DP-8. ■

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Tell us a bit about yourself and your operation.

My name is Philip Kroesbergen, but everyone calls me Phil.

Technically, I have always been a veal farmer. I've helped buy, feed, move, ship, and take care of veal cattle ever since I was a little kid. I've been full-time on the farm since 2017 when I started to help manage and take on more responsibility. We produce over 1600 head of veal cattle per year, shipped direct to the packer.

I grew up near Strathroy, Ontario as the third out of four children. In 2001, when I was about five, my parents bought a farm to start fresh as a grain-fed veal operation. Our home farm (and farm that I live on) are located in Middlesex County. We own roughly 120 acres of workable land and rent 180 acres that we rotate corn and soybeans in.

I manage the farm with my dad, Marvin and my brother, Aaron. Two part-time employees help with the daily work. Our entire income is the farm. We do our best to produce enough veal cattle to make a decent living. We feed the corn we produce and ship our soybeans off the field on contract.

I was fortunate to grow up on a farm and have so much space and opportunity to have fun and to learn all about the business. After finishing high school, I went to the University of Guelph for the Food and Agricultural Business program. If I get asked if going to university was worth it even though I came back home to farm, I would say it definitely was.

Do you have any tips for sourcing calves?

I do all the sourcing of calves myself. I spend time twice a week going to sales barns and trucking them to the home farm. I'm looking for bob calves mostly. I will buy a starter calf here and there but I'm really looking for two- to three-week-old calves.

I wouldn't give away the criteria that I use for buying calves, but I would say the most important thing to me is that the calf is healthy, and it has some age. The more confidence I have that the calf has been given a good start, the more interested I am in buying the calf. It's important to get the calves home and put away as soon as I can. The calves are tired, and their gut needs to settle down after all the moving and commotion. If you notice a calf has a navel infection, it's best to medicate right away.

Can you describe your feeding program?

Our feeding program is a traditional grain-fed veal ration. The young calves get milk and a high-fibre pellet ration on the side. Pre-weaned calves get introduced to corn increasingly until they reach the starter barn, where they're fed 3:1. The finisher veal ration increases slowly to 4:1 over time.



What are attributes of well-finished veal cattle, in your opinion?

Well-finished veal cattle, to me, are in the 725 to 750 pounds range. They haven't reached the next growth stage where they get too tall. I like to see veal cattle with back and legs filled out. The colour of the meat is very important for high-quality veal. If the cattle are stressed or moved or put on scales too much the colour will suffer.

Can you tell us about your experience building new barns?

A good barn set-up is important for any farmer. It gives the opportunity to efficiently produce livestock and reduces the difficulty for the farmer. My family has used many old barns over the years, but none of them have been as pleasant to work in and efficient as the ones that we have designed and built for ourselves. It's important when building a barn to keep things simple but ensure that every base is covered. The builder doesn't know or understand veal production, so working with them closely is crucial.

What do you enjoy most about farming?

I enjoy the freedom to do what I think is best for the farm. If I think expanding the business is the right thing to do, then I can do that. If I need to focus on building improvements, I can do that. There's always lots of work to do but there's enough time to work on other projects or come up with new ideas.

Farming with family is good because we trust each other and what's good for one family member is good for everyone. We all work together to take care of the farm and make a living.

What value does VFO provide you as a farmer?

Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) has provided value to my farm in a way that I didn't expect. It has given me insight into the world of agriculture, the business environment, and the veal industry itself that I wouldn't have known otherwise. They say knowledge is power and I have definitely gained a lot of knowledge over the past number of years being on the Board and engaged with the organization.

What are you looking forward to most in your role as Chair?

I look forward to being a better leader in my role as Chair. I have the opportunity to grow in my ability to make decisions and to manage people and help them grow as well. While I may be considered young for a Chair, I have a lot of experience in the industry and hope to show others that being young isn't a barrier for being a good leader.

Where do you see the veal industry in the next five to 10 years?

I think that it's exciting to be a farmer in a time where agriculture is booming in Ontario. We have an opportunity to grow our farms and reach new markets for our product. In the future, the veal industry may not be as large but as long as the dairy industry continues to grow there will be calves to feed, and we will continue to make a good product. ■

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Cryptosporidium parvum regularly associated with diarrhea in Ontario calves

Dr. Cynthia Miltenburg

on behalf of the bovine Ontario Animal Health Network

The bovine Ontario Animal Health Network (OAHN) regularly monitors data from laboratory submissions to look for trends among bovine disease in Ontario. Data from samples submitted for post-mortem analysis and other diagnostic tests helps us understand the most common disease challenges producers and veterinarians are facing.

Undoubtedly among young calves, the most common disease work up is for diarrhea. There are several different pathogens that can cause diarrhea in calves, and diagnostic testing is important to show which diarrhea-causing agents are involved. One pathogen, *Cryptosporidium parvum*, commonly referred to as Crypto, is an ongoing concern for calf raisers. Last year, 43 per cent of 469 calf fecal samples tested were positive for *Cryptosporidium parvum* at the Animal Health Laboratory. It is worth noting that many diarrhea cases are mixed infections and other pathogens may also be present in addition to *Cryptosporidium parvum* in some of these cases. Calf diarrhea with multiple agents is more complex to control and working with a veterinarian is important.

Lab data only represents cases where a veterinarian chose to submit samples for diagnostics, which may represent more severe or difficult to treat cases, and highlights that this may be a challenging disease agent. But other research studies tell a similar story. When a sample of 500 calves from 51 different Ontario dairy farms with a history of diarrhea were tested in 2005, 40.6 per cent of calves were found to be infected with *Cryptosporidium parvum*, with anywhere from zero to 70 per cent of calves infected in individual herds.

Cryptosporidium parvum is an internal parasite found in calves in their first month of life. Calves become infected when they ingest parasite oocysts shed in the feces of other infected calves. The parasite is then released from the oocyst and invades cells in the intestine where it undergoes several more life stages before ultimately producing millions

more oocysts that are shed back into the environment. The infective dose has been shown in research to be only 25 oocysts, and the higher the dose a calf receives, the more ill the calf becomes. This low dose for infection and extremely high shedding pattern creates a heavily contaminated environment that puts all calves at risk and can cause a major breakdown on-farm.

Infected calves suffer from diarrhea and severe dehydration, quickly becoming weak, and in severe cases, death can occur. Recovered calves may suffer from a delay in growth. For calves affected with cryptosporidiosis, fluid and electrolyte replacement is critical to prevent dehydration along with nutritional support. Use of an anti-inflammatory such as meloxicam can also be beneficial for calves with diarrhea. Antibiotics are ineffective at treating *Cryptosporidium parvum* and should only be used as per your veterinary protocol for neonatal diarrhea.

Like calves, humans are susceptible to infection from this parasite as well. Anyone handling an animal with cryptosporidiosis should take great care to practice good hygiene to avoid becoming ill themselves or other members of their family. Children and people with other health conditions may be more susceptible and develop more serious disease. Handling ill animals last, proper handwashing, and not bringing barn clothes outside of the barn can help protect calf caregivers. If you have concerns about your own health, it is best to speak to your health care practitioner.

Our main points of control for this disease are general sanitation measures to prevent infection of naïve calves. *Cryptosporidium parvum* can persist in the environment for a long time, particularly during high summertime temperatures and humidity. Having a diagnosis of cryptosporidiosis can guide how to manage calves. *Cryptosporidium parvum* is resistant to many disinfectants but some are still useful to reduce overall pathogen



load in the facilities. Keeping bedding fresh and minimizing overcrowding will also support lower pathogen load. The herd veterinarian may also recommend an anti-protozoal solution called Halofuginone lactate for calves at risk as part of the overall strategy to lower shedding and new infections. Supporting a robust immune system of calves with delivery of colostrum at birth and a high plane of nutrition will also help. When naïve calves were experimentally challenged with *Cryptosporidium parvum*, a high plane of nutrition supported maintenance of hydration, faster resolution of diarrhea, and growth.

Cryptosporidium parvum is a common challenge for dairy and veal producers; working with the herd veterinarian when diarrhea occurs to get a diagnosis will help tailor management to best support calf health. ■

Key facts for control and prevention in calves:

- House unaffected calves away from affected calves
- Minimize group size
- Remove manure and replace bedding frequently
- Clean and disinfect housing between calves and let rest. Chlorine dioxide has been shown to have efficacy at reducing overall environmental load
- Feed calves at least 20 per cent of body weight on milk or milk replacer feeding programs

References available upon request.



The Bovine Ontario Animal Health Network is a group of veterinarians and specialists working in government, university research and laboratories, and in beef, dairy, and veal practice who meet regularly to monitor and discuss disease trends in Ontario. Our goals are to facilitate coordinated preparedness, early detection, and response to animal health and welfare in Ontario. For our recent reports or more information visit www.oahn.ca.



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Fecal consistency scoring: Why should you spend your time evaluating it?

Dr. Dave Renaud

ACER Consulting Ltd.

Diarrhea remains one of the most commonly diagnosed diseases amongst calves within the veal and dairy industries. Its occurrence on farms is associated with higher rates of antibiotic treatment and increased mortality, where five per cent of calves that require treatment for diarrhea end up dying. Even in calves that survive the initial onset of disease, long-term impacts may occur such as reduced growth, increased age at first calving, and reduced first lactation milk production for dairy animals.

In fact, a recent study found that the longer calves had diarrhea, the greater the impact on weight gain. For example, calves that spent more than 10 of their first 28 days with diarrhea weighed 16 kg (35.3 lbs.) less compared to calves that had seven of their first 28 days with diarrhea (see **Figure 1**). Altogether, it is estimated that each case of diarrhea costs at least \$150.

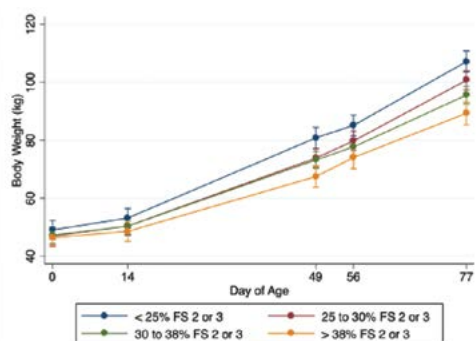


Figure 1. Impact of diarrhea (Fecal Score (FS) 2 or 3) in the first 28 days on body weight gain.

Clearly, diarrhea is a significant challenge to calves. An important consideration to minimize short and long-term consequences of diarrhea is to identify calves early in the disease process. To do this, fecal consistency scoring can be used to ensure accuracy and consistency.

What is fecal consistency scoring?

Fecal consistency scoring is the visual assessment of feces where it is scored on a scale of 0 to 3, where 0 = normal (firm but not hard, original form is distorted slightly after dropping to the floor and settling); 1 = soft (does not hold form, piles but spreads slightly); 2 = runny (spreads readily); and 3 = watery (liquid consistency, splatters). A fecal score of 2 or 3 indicates the presence of diarrhea, as these consistency scores describe feces with high water content. Examples of each score are depicted on the next page.

How to use fecal consistency scoring?

Although fecal consistency scoring may seem like an academic exercise, it can have a lot of utility when used routinely. Fecal scoring calves when feeding or handling them helps to identify calves at the onset of diarrhea. It

also acts as a consistent guide on when to intervene. When calves are identified with a fecal score of 2 or 3, which indicates diarrhea, an additional feeding of electrolytes can be provided. Providing oral fluid therapy (electrolytes) at the onset of diarrhea will help to prevent dehydration, which is ultimately responsible for calf death.

An additional therapy that could be provided when calves are identified with a fecal score of 2 or 3, is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID). Calves treated with an NSAID at the onset of diarrhea are more likely to consume their daily milk allowance, consume starter ration earlier and at a greater rate, and consume more water compared to untreated calves, which translates into better gains when they are treated. Therefore, using an NSAID at the onset of diarrhea can contribute to improved recovery and reduce the impact of the disease.

Beyond the benefits of using fecal consistency scoring to identify calves early in the course of diarrhea, it is a simple and easy tool to train other personnel responsible for managing calves. It has been shown to be fairly repeatable between individuals, meaning it can help calves with diarrhea be identified early and allow for consistent treatment between staff members.

When should fecal consistency scoring be used?

Special attention should be paid from birth to 14 days of age as that is when the majority of diarrhea occurs, as highlighted in **Figure 2**.

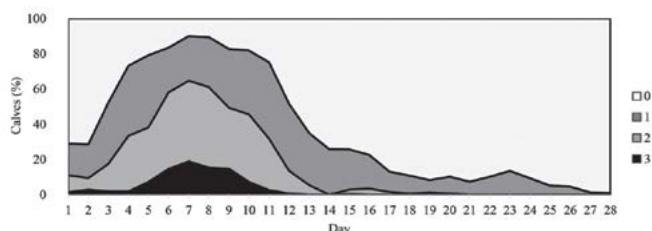


Figure 2. Age range when calf diarrhea is most likely to occur.

Take home messages





Diarrhea is very common in calves and can be costly. Ensuring that we intervene early in the disease process can be helpful to reduce the impact of diarrhea. Using fecal consistency scoring routinely can help to identify early signs of diarrhea, where an electrolyte and/or NSAID can be provided to improve recovery. Monitoring dehydration, including eye recession and attitude, is also critical to determine when intravenous fluid therapy is needed. Work with your veterinarian to develop diarrhea identification and treatment protocols to help improve calf health on your farm. ■

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

FECAL SCORING

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Birth to 14 days-evaluate twice daily to prevent dehydration

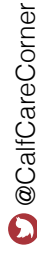
Score		Description	Action
0		NORMAL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> firm but not hard original form is distorted slightly after dropping to the floor and settling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MONITOR
1		SOFT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not hold form piles but spreads slightly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> INTERVENE EARLY PROVIDE ORAL ELECTROLYTES
2		RUNNY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> spreads readily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EVALUATE DEHYDRATION PROVIDE ORAL ELECTROLYTES DO NOT WITHHOLD MILK OR MILK REPLACER
3		WATERY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> liquid consistency splatters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EVALUATE DEHYDRATION PROVIDE ORAL ELECTROLYTES FOLLOW TREATMENT PROTOCOL DO NOT WITHHOLD MILK OR MILK REPLACER

It is estimated that one case of diarrhea could cost up to \$150 in losses.

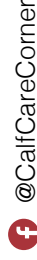
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Am I ready to be weaned?

Amanda Kerr, M.Sc., Senior Nutritionist

Grober Nutrition Inc.

Notably a stressful period for a calf, weaning can quickly offset a calf's performance trajectory if done at the incorrect time or way. Whether managing a calf destined for meat or milk production, the basic concepts of readiness to wean remain the same. Factors such as time on milk, amount of milk fed, calf health and housing type should all be considered when determining if a calf is ready to be weaned.

Increasing the length of the preweaning period has been shown to benefit a calf's transition from milk to solid feed. Extending the time on milk allows for greater total solid feed intake. This improves rumen and gut development which is needed for calves to efficiently utilize nutrients in solid feed. In a trial conducted at the Grober Young Animal Development Centre (GYADC), calves which were weaned at 10 weeks compared to those at seven weeks showed stronger growth rate, less variation in their growth rate, and consumed more solid feed as a percentage of body weight prior to, during, and after weaning (see **Figure 1**).

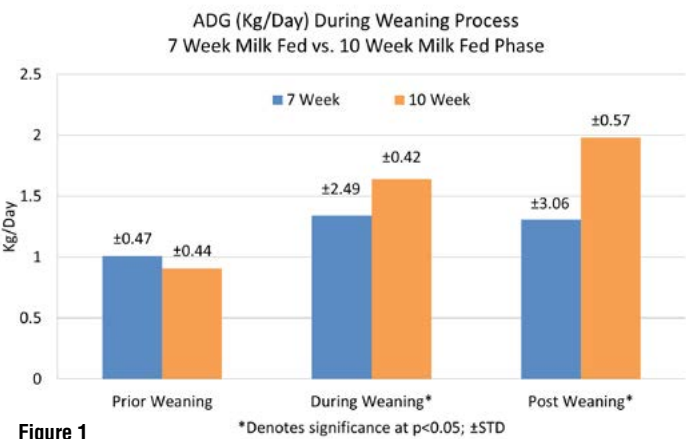


Figure 1

Nevertheless, the amount of milk fed is as important to consider as the time on milk when determining readiness to wean. To meet nutrient requirements for strong growth and health, a target feeding rate of one kilogram (kg) or more of milk replacer powder per day is needed. When providing large volumes of milk, early solid feed intake may be suppressed, but can be stimulated by altering the milk feeding schedule after the first month. Creating a mismatch between volume of milk fed, time on milk, and duration of weaning will undo feed cost investments in the preweaning period. For instance, feeding 1.1 kg of milk powder to calves allowed for greater growth compared to 0.6 kg or 0.8 kg per day, but by weaning over one week and removing milk at 49 days of age, this preweaning advantage was lost in the immediate post-weaning period resulting in both lower growth and digestibility of starter feed. As a simple rule, for every one litre of milk fed, there needs to be one day, if not more, allocated to stepping milk allowance down to weaning. Regardless

of time on milk and volume of milk fed, the weaning process must be gradual, and must not begin too early as to not limit milk intake before solid feed intake becomes established. The calf is reliant on this gradual transition and balance of nutrients from milk and solid feed to meet their nutrient requirements.

Tapping into the social aspect of a herd animal is another tactic to ensure readiness to be weaned. It has been well-established that calves which are raised in pairs, small groups, or paired close to the start of weaning will have greater solid feed intake over calves who are housed individually throughout the preweaning and weaning periods. If housing calves in small groups or pairs is not feasible, an alternative approach is to ensure individually housed calves have ample space. Providing calves with 3.71 m² of pen space resulted in earlier and greater consumption of solid feed compared to smaller pen sizes.

Regardless of milk feeding schedule and housing type, one last critical piece when determining if a calf is ready to be weaned is health and management during the preweaning period. From GYADC research, severity of calf scours had a lasting impact on calf performance. Calves considered clinically diarrheic (\geq three days with watery to loose scours) not only had lower growth rates, but showed depressed solid feed intake compared to their counterparts who were otherwise healthy (no to mild scours which quickly resolved). See **Figure 2**. Monitoring and sorting calves throughout the preweaning period will help ensure that calves who either need extra time on milk or need to be housed with a buddy calf are ready to be weaned.

GYADC Research: Implications of Scours During the First 35 Days on Solid Feed Intake and Growth			
	Healthy (No or mild scours quick to resolve)	Diarrheic (\geq 3 days with watery loose scour)	P-value
Total Solid Feed Intake Day 1 - 35	19.6 Kg	11.3 Kg	$P < 0.0001$
Body Weight Gained Day 1 - 35	28.7 Kg	23.9 Kg	$P < 0.003$

Figure 2

When determining if calves are “ready to be weaned”, remember to ask these three key questions:

1. Is the amount of milk fed and time on milk matched?
2. Has the calf been consistently consuming solid feed?
3. Are there any health (previous or current) and/or management decisions such as dehorning which may derail weaning success?

Monitoring calves as they transition into the post-weaning period will be a compass to gauge how well weaning is managed. ■

References available upon request.

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¹ Dr. Geof Smith, DVM, PhD, Dipl. ACVIM. Dept of Population Health and Pathology, North Carolina State University. Common Myths in Treating Calf Diarrhea.

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Upcoming tagging changes in the dairy industry



Mackayla de Kwant, DairyTrace Program Manager

Lactanet Canada

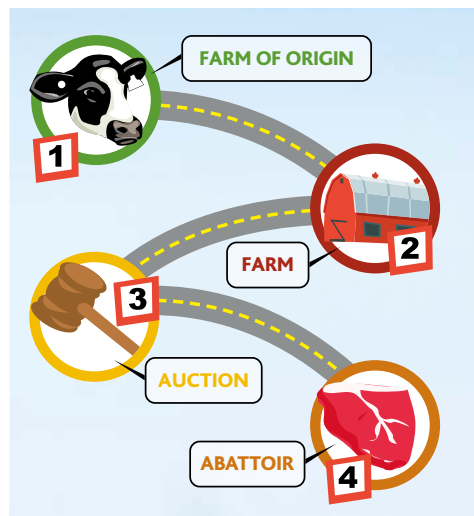
Did you know? DairyTrace and proAction® encourage dual tagging as the ideal practice for identifying all calves born on dairy farms across Canada. As an allowable exception, the white single button radio frequency identification (RFID) tag was introduced by DairyTrace in 2020 as an option for identifying calves born on a dairy farm but are destined for purposes other than dairy production. This exception does not apply in provinces where double tagging is required.

Since 2020, both the DairyTrace white single button RFID ear tag and the approved Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) beef tags were allowable under proAction® as an exception for identifying any calves born on a dairy farm and destined for purposes other than dairy production. However, as of **September 1, 2023**, this exception for dual tagging will now only allow the use of white single button RFID dairy tags and not yellow CCIA beef tags. *Note: these changes do not affect farmers in the province of Quebec as dual tagging is already required for all calves.*

Why?

The goal of our national dairy cattle traceability system is to follow the movement of all calves born on a dairy farm **from birth to end of life**. Even if calves leave the dairy farm early in life, the disease traceback system for dairy cattle will be most effective for both dairy and veal production sectors if the movement data on these animals is part of the DairyTrace database.

By knowing where animals come from and where they reside, consumers and suppliers alike can feel confident in their food supply chain – thanks to transparent livestock traceability. The transition to the white single button dairy tags from the yellow beef tags will keep the traceability information for dairy-born animals within DairyTrace to ensure a strong and responsive traceability system.



What does this mean to veal farmers?

As veal farmers, you have a choice and can either continue to purchase yellow CCIA tags or order the white single button tags for use on your farm in case of tag loss. Since veal producers and dairy farmers share such a close relationship, while not mandatory, we encourage the use of white single RFID button tags on veal farms.

Hint: When retagging an animal that has lost its ear tag, remember to report the cross-reference event with their previous and new tag number to a national traceability database

(DairyTrace/Canadian Livestock Tracking System (CLTS)). If you are using the white single button tags, report these tagging events through DairyTrace.

How does this affect veal farmers?

As a result of this change, veal farmers and affiliates of the dairy industry will notice that all calves born on a dairy farm after September 1, 2023, will be identified with a white dairy tag (either dual or single) and should no longer be tagged by dairy farmers with a yellow CCIA beef tag. If an animal arrives at your operation with a white single button tag, this is an official tag and removal of this tag is prohibited by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

What is happening to the yellow CCIA beef tags?

The yellow CCIA beef tags will still be available for purchase for non-dairy producers. Starting September 1, 2023, dairy farmers will be required to apply a white dairy tag (either dual or single), rather than using CCIA beef tags to the calves identified in the exception.

Setting up a DairyTrace account

If you wish to set up a DairyTrace account to order dairy tags or to report traceability events you can contact DairyTrace Customer Services by email, info@dairytrace.ca or phone 1-866-558-7223 and request to set up a veal producer account.

Setting up an account can also help create a one-stop reporting of all required bovine traceability events for all calves on your veal operation directly to DairyTrace (including any that may have a yellow beef tag). In addition, upon creating an account and completing a move-in event, you can access birthdate certificates for dairy-tagged calves for age verification. Being a part of the dairy industry traceability system and working alongside Canada's dairy farmers maintains a strong partnership between our industries. ■

VFO needs your help to provide key communications to our members.



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What Veal Farmers of Ontario has done for calf management



Kendra Keels

Industry Development Director



What Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) has done for calf management, not only in Ontario but around the globe, is worth recognizing. Before calves were a hip topic to talk about, veal producers always highlighted the challenges with the male dairy calves received on farms, and those calves were representative of challenges with most calves in Ontario.

Over the years veal producers have noted changes in the quality of calves, in particular the overall health of the calves, entering the barn. Back in the 1990s, calves entering barns experienced health challenges. In 2004 a benchmarking study was conducted at the University of Guelph, noting that 37 per cent of the calves had a total protein level of <5.1 g/dl. This explained what veal producers were observing on a daily basis and the cause of their frustrations.

Just prior to the University of Guelph 2004 study, another research study was conducted in 2002 through the National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) in the United States, which identified heifer mortality at 10.8 per cent. Calf health in North America was not going in the right direction.

As you read this you might be wondering how does VFO fit with poor colostrum management and high heifer mortality? What was happening on the dairy farms was exacerbated on veal farms. Adding the stress of commingling and transportation caused the challenges on veal farms to be difficult. Visionaries in the veal industry during this time decided that more education and knowledge transfer from research and experience needed to be communicated to anyone raising calves, regardless of sex.

In 2004, the inaugural Building the Foundation, Dairy and Veal Healthy Calf

Conference launched. Bringing the thought leaders of calf management together to share their knowledge and expertise with farmers was a huge hit and continues today with an even bigger following. As we were moving into 2006, we knew we needed more resources, and we developed our calfcare.ca website. We wanted to have a central website for all calf resources. We know farmers are busy and do not have time to research solutions, they just need answers. Shortly after the immensely popular Calf Care Corner e-newsletter launched, we asked ourselves what more can we do to help change producers' habits and further improve the care calves receive and we decided to launch our social media channels. Once the social media channels launched the sharing of calf care knowledge reached even new heights.

With the focus of calf management for veal producers because of frustration with the quality of calves, we ask ourselves is the work of VFO effective? In 2019, through the University of Guelph, we repeated the colostrum study, discovering that 19 per cent of the calves had a total protein level of <5.1 g/dl, showing a vast improvement (see **Figure 1**). The message was getting out about colostrum management. As for mortality, a similar study to the NAHMS was conducted in Canada in 2018, Canadian National Dairy Study:

Category	Serum IgG (g/L)	Total Protein (g/dL)	% Brix	Target (% calves)	2004 Ontario level	2019 Ontario level
Excellent	≥ 25.0	≥ 6.2	≥ 9.4	> 40		32%
Good	18.0 to 24.9	5.8 to 6.1	8.9 to 9.3	~ 30	63%	17%
Fair	10.0 to 17.9	5.1 to 5.7	8.1 to 8.8	~ 20		32%
Poor	< 10.0	< 5.1	< 8.1	< 10	37%	19%

Figure 1



CalfCare.ca
Off to a healthy start

Heifer calf management, and it identified preweaning mortality of heifers at 6.4 per cent and post-weaning at 2.4 per cent. This was the first Canadian study to identify heifer mortality. Assuming mortality in Canada was similar to the US in 2002, there was a vast improvement in heifer mortality from 2002 to 2018.

We believe that these improvements in numbers demonstrates that education and awareness is working, and the message is getting to dairy farmers about the importance of colostrum. We believe the work that VFO does is helping to move the bar on calf health and welfare.

Producers might not be aware of the effort VFO commits to calf care resources and we are always flattered when people reference or include our resources in their work. It demonstrates to us that the work we do is valuable and important to not only producers but to industry allies. We are always happy to give permission but ask that we do get credit for our resources and photos. This helps keep the work VFO does visible and respected.

We are proud of the work we do; it is the right thing to do, and it is making a difference. If you have an issue on your farm you would like to see additional resources for, please reach out to discuss, we are always willing to listen. What started out as what seemed like a huge hurdle to jump in the early '90s has been gaining momentum ever since. We thank the calf researchers today for their keen interest in calves, together we are making a difference. ■

References are available upon request.

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Bill 97 and the Proposed Provincial Policy Statement

The Government of Ontario recently introduced Bill 97 *Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act* and a new proposed Provincial Policy Statement. Taken together these changes will increase the amount of rural and agricultural land available for development. Some proposed changes include settlement area expansions (larger urban growth boundaries), reduced agricultural land protection, and greater ability for the province to use Minister's Zoning Orders (MZOs) to overrule local planning decisions. These changes would also allow the creation of three lots per parcel of land. There are no intensification targets linked to these legislative changes. Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) is active working with our industry partners to ensure that the government understands the importance of farmland preservation.

Protecting Farmers for Non-Payment Act

The *Protecting Farmers from Non-Payment Act* is part of the government's Bill 91 *Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act*. This Act will bring the *Farm Products Payments Act*, *Grains Act*, and *Livestock and Livestock Products Act* together under a new, more flexible structure. This legislation will give boards such as the Livestock Financial Protection Board greater flexibility to ensure compliance with regulations and can reduce regulatory burden on farmers. Specific new regulation is expected to be proposed once the legislation has passed.

Veterinarians Act

The Government of Ontario is reforming the *Veterinarians Act* (the Act), making the first major changes to this legislation in 30 years. Many of the proposed changes are administrative in nature and do not directly impact livestock agriculture. Some of the more substantive changes include expanding the Council of the College of Veterinarians to include veterinary technicians, academic appointees (from the Ontario Veterinary College) and additional public interest appointees (appointed by the Province of Ontario). The Act would also regulate which practices can be performed by a veterinarian or veterinary technician and which practices can be delegated to other professionals. The consultations also propose changes to improve and streamline the complaints and resolutions process to make decisions more transparent and to grant the College of Veterinarians Ontario power to dismiss claims deemed to be frivolous and vexatious. VFO has been involved in the consultation process and is supportive of these changes which are a step in the right direction to improve veterinary care in the province. ■

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Voluntary country of origin labeling in the US

On Monday March 13, 2023, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), introduced a voluntary country of origin labeling (COOL) proposal. Under this regulation, labeling single ingredient meat, poultry, and egg products "Product of the USA" or "Made in the USA" requires that an animal be born, raised, and harvested in the US.

The voluntary labeling rules are different from previous country-of-origin labels, which required companies to disclose where animals supplying beef and pork were born, raised, and processed. That requirement was rolled back in 2015, after international trade disputes and a ruling from the World Trade Organization. Processors and other supply chain partners won't have to prove that their meat products are born and raised in the US before using the

labels, but they will have to file documentation. These documents will demonstrate the controls used to trace and segregate, from the time of birth or processing, through packaging and wholesale or retail distribution, source animals, and all additional ingredients other than spices and flavorings to ensure compliance with the proposed new labelling requirements. These changes could have a significant impact on the nearly 11 billion dollars' worth of Canada-US trade in live cattle, hogs, turkey, veal, beef, and pork.

The Canadian and American meat and livestock industries are heavily intertwined and share common interests, objectives, and similarly high standards in terms of food safety, animal health, and quality. Measures like voluntary COOL risk disrupting trade and further stretching weakened supply chains

while running contrary to the principals of free trade set out in the Canada-United States-Mexico Free Trade Agreement (CUSMA). These changes increase costs for processors, especially small and medium-sized businesses, and further raise prices for consumers who are already struggling with high food inflation. The US is the principal export market for Canadian veal. Changes to the requirements for how veal is labelled in the US could lead to shifts in existing supply chains and may cause American processors to discriminate against importing Canadian veal.

Through our national organization, the Canadian Veal Association (CVA), and other industry partners, Veal Farmers of Ontario will continue to advocate for reduced trade barriers and minimal disruptions to the integrated North American veal and red meat supply chain. ■

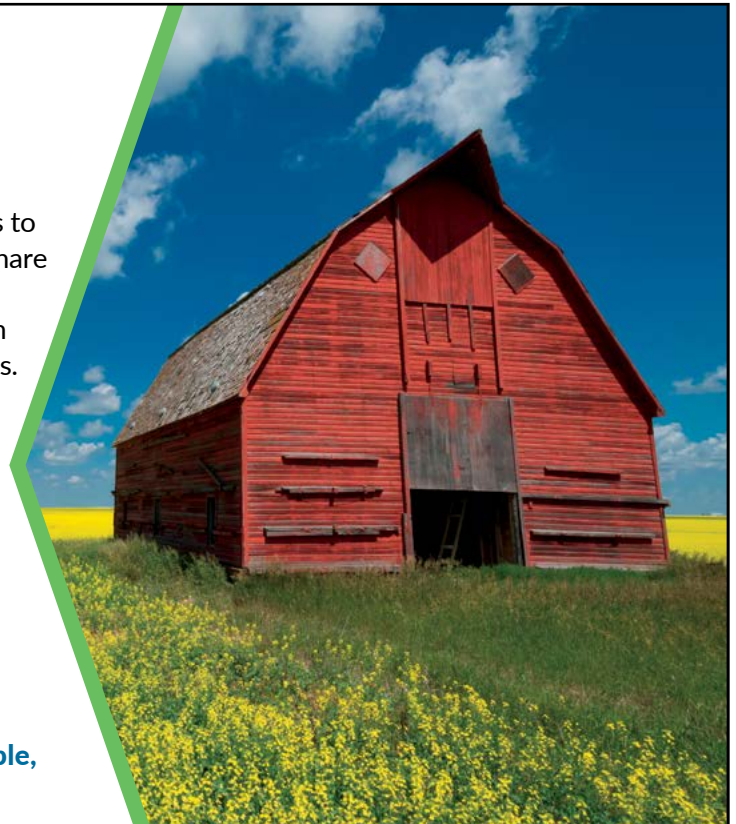


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Direct-to-consumer sales

Erich Weber, CPA, Business Finance Specialist

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Veal farmers may have other options for selling their veal. Most veal farmers use an auction market, or sell directly to the meat processor; however, there is another option. Direct-to-consumer, or direct farm marketing can be a viable option for farmers. In this article, we will look at the key aspects of selling directly to consumers that businesses need to consider.

Before you get started

Before starting a direct-to-consumer business in conjunction with your veal operation, you will need to create a written business plan for your prospective direct-to-consumer business. Your business plan should outline:

- Products you plan on selling.
- Who is going to operate this business.
- How you will market your business and products.
- How this direct-to-consumer business will financially affect your farm business.
- Livestock farmers will need to include preferred processing facilities and any alternative choices if needed.

When working through your business plan, take the time to think about your prospective direct-to-consumer business and how it aligns with your farming operation.

Marketing

Marketing is an important task to complete as part of your business plan. A marketing plan should include how your veal products differentiate from others and why the consumer should buy your veal products compared to others found in the grocery store or at other farm businesses.

Addressing the 4 P's of marketing will help you answer these questions. The 4 P's of marketing are:

Product – what is your product and what makes it different from other products.

Price – what price are you going to charge for your veal products.

Promotion – how you will promote your veal/farm business.

Place – how will you sell your veal? (i.e., on-farm store, website, farmers' market, etc.).

The 4 P's of marketing help you to summarize how your direct-to-consumer business will operate, how the business differentiates itself from its competitors and how to be sustainable.

Leveraging the Foodland Ontario logo

Ontario farmers, processors and businesses can become a Foodland Ontario partner at **no cost**.

Using the Foodland Ontario logo on your local food products, website and marketing materials is the best way to help consumers identify local food when shopping at their grocery store, farmers' market, and on-farm market.

If your local food products align with the definitions of Ontario foods outlined on foodlandontario.ca, you can submit your form online to apply for a logo agreement.

As a partner, you will have access to a wide variety of complimentary point-of-sale materials (e.g., price cards, base wrap, recipe pads, etc.), information resources and participate in marketing and promotional efforts to spotlight the brand.



Selling your products

There are options to sell your products directly to the consumer. Here are some options to consider.



Farmers' market

Local farmers' markets are a common option for many farmers to start their direct-to-consumer business. Farmers' markets attract potential customers looking for local produce and products that can benefit your operation. Farmers' markets usually occur once or twice a week. The advantage of selling at a farmers' market is that it gives you more time to complete other tasks on your farm, but it can also mean that you are potentially losing sales that could help your profitability.



e-commerce platform

Using an online selling platform or e-commerce platform can be an efficient tool for a farmer to grow their direct-to-consumer business. There are multiple companies that offer to set up a website and/or an online store at a reasonable price. It is important to make sure that either yourself, or someone in your farm operation, has the skills and knowledge to operate the online store and website.



On-farm store

Selling directly from the farm through a standalone building or an existing building is another option to sell your products. Using this method, you would have control over the marketing and how you would like to display your products. However, it may be difficult to attract customers to your store. For example, if your farm store is not near a major highway or road, customers may not be able to find your store.

You will need to decide which options are suitable for your business. It is a good idea to connect with other direct-to-consumer farm businesses to see what options would be best suited for your business.

Conclusion

Selling directly to the consumer may be a viable option for your farm operation. Take the time to complete a written business plan and connect with other direct-to-consumer farm operations to determine whether selling directly to the consumer is right for your farm business. For more information about direct-to-consumer/direct farm marketing, please visit: <https://bit.ly/directmktprimer>. ■



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INDUSTRY

updates



VFO participates in the Grow Ontario Food Summit

Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) was pleased to participate in the second annual Grow Ontario Food Summit hosted by the Honourable Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, alongside her Parliamentary Assistants Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) Trevor Jones and MPP Rob Flack at the end of March.

Colleagues from across the agri-food spectrum gathered at Hart House, University of Toronto. The focus of the Summit was on the Grow Ontario provincial agri-food strategy and how we can all work together to strengthen Ontario's agri-food sector. The Summit was an excellent opportunity to discuss ideas and collaborate on strategies that will strengthen the agri-food supply chain, increase agri-food technology and adoption, and attract and grow Ontario's agri-food talent.

VFO talks with producers at the CDX

VFO attended the Canadian Dairy Xpo (CDX) held in Stratford in early April, reconnecting with veal and dairy producer members, discussing industry issues, promoting calf care, and distributing resources. We encouraged producers to visit our booth, tweeting throughout the day and promoting our location on VFO's social media channels.



Thank you to everyone who stopped by our booth, including Minister Thompson, MPP Matthew Rae and Senator Rob Black. We appreciate your support of Ontario's agri-food sector!

Grain-fed veal fact sheets

VFO has developed a series of fact sheets that will help answer common questions about starting and operating a grain-fed veal farm. Recent releases include keeping veal cattle clean. Learn more at <https://bit.ly/GFfactsheets>.

Ontario veal producer featured in Faces Behind Food

Food unites us, but how much do we know about the people who work hard day-in and day-out to ensure Canadians have access to fresh, safe, nutritious, and delicious food? With a food supply chain as diverse and plentiful as ours – it really does take a village. Faces Behind Food captures the passion behind the food that we love, one person (and pup!) at a time.

Maranda, an Ontario veal farmer and reigning Ontario Queen of the Furrow, and her dog Darla were recently profiled for the project with stories focusing on their family's commitment to agriculture and their community. Their stories were shared on Instagram and Facebook in mid-April. The profiles received great feedback and positive comments, providing another opportunity to highlight our Ontario veal farm families.



Join VFO's private Facebook groups for producers

VFO has two private Facebook groups to help foster connections between members, share timely sector updates, and provide a space for discussing production and industry issues. The Marketing of male dairy calves in Ontario group is designed for dairy and veal producers, and for those starting calves for the dairy-beef market. The Finishing grain-fed veal in Ontario group is geared towards producers finishing male dairy cattle for veal markets. To join, send a request! Both are great forums to ask questions and start important conversations.

Advance Payments Program

The Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC) is pleased to announce that for the 2023 program year, producers applying under the Advance Payments Program will be eligible for up to \$350,000 interest-free. The program, which is utilized by producers and ranchers, allows agricultural producers to apply for up to \$1 million with the first \$350,000 interest-free and the remaining at Prime.

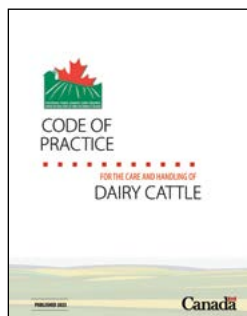
The Advance Payments Program is a federal government program designed to provide funding to producers and ranchers to plant, grow, harvest and market their products.

"In these financially challenging times for producers where we see input and operating costs rising significantly, I am pleased that Agricultural Credit Corporation can assist, farmers with this program to reduce interest charges on their operating lines," commented Jaye Atkins, Chief Executive Officer of ACC.

To apply for this program or for further information, please contact ACC at 1-888-278-8807.

Dairy Code update

The National Farm Animal Care Council and Dairy Farmers of Canada are pleased to announce the release of the updated *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle*. The updated Code is now available at www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/dairy-cattle. It replaces its predecessor, developed in 2009, effective April 1, 2024 (unless indicated otherwise in Requirements with a later phase-in date). The 2009 dairy cattle Code will remain in effect until March 31, 2024.



Biosecurity stop signs and resources

The Ontario Livestock & Poultry Council (OLPC) office still has biosecurity stop signs in stock. They can be ordered by calling the office at 519-787-4322 or emailing Laura at laura.tfio@bell.net. Signs are \$20.00 + HST.

They also have biosecurity videos on DVD. The videos work well for training non-agricultural staff and for 4-H or school groups. You can view the videos at www.ontlpc.com/videos.html. Order forms for DVDs can be found here: www.ontlpc.com/resources.html.



Manure Monday biosecurity for disease prevention

Avian influenza (AI), Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea (PEDv), African Swine Fever (ASF) and *Salmonella* Dublin (S. Dublin) are some of the diseases that can move with manure and can devastate livestock production. In this webinar, Al Dam (poultry specialist with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs) and Susan Fitzgerald (Fitzgerald and Company) provide an overview of disease transmission on the farm (including from manure) as well as prevention strategies and biosecurity measures for livestock producers, manure applicators as well as consultants and industry people visiting farms. Watch the video on Biosecurity for Disease Prevention here: <https://youtu.be/fsjoljsa1zc>.

Updates to the Nutrient Management Tables

The government of Ontario has updated Table 1 and Table 2 of the Nutrient Management Tables, a part of the Nutrient Management Protocol. The tables, which are intended to provide technical data to assist farmers in the development of their Nutrient Management Strategies and Nutrient Management Plans, are updated periodically to reflect current industry practices.

The updated livestock housing capacity for grain-fed veal is 5.85 m² per head. Producers will need to use these new unit amounts moving forward with respect to their nutrient management plans. Veal farmers can access the updated tables here: <https://bit.ly/vealNMplan>. ■



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Smart Calf Rearing Conference shares the latest calf research



Kendra Keels

Industry Development Director



The Smart Calf Rearing Conference, held in Germany March 25 to 28 at the Hofgut Neumühle and at the Fraunhofer Institute in Kaiserslautern, attracted leading scientists and calf health experts from the United States, Canada, Germany, and Belgium.

This event, dating back to 2017 in Germany, is a joint project between Förster-Technik, Trouw Nutrition and the University of Guelph. In 2019, the conference was held at the University of Guelph and because of the pandemic was delayed to 2023 back in Germany. This event is designed to bring together academics, veterinarians, and associated industry to share innovative ideas and the latest in calf research.

The March conference began with a producer education day on Saturday

where local farmers learned about current research that would be applicable to their calf management programs, for example reminders of how much milk calves should be fed and the benefits of an older weaning age. The latest research suggests that weaning should take place between 14 and 16 weeks because the rumen is not mature during the 8- to 12-week period. This can lead to issues like leaky gut, sub-acute ruminal acidosis (SARA), inflammation, and increased antibiotic use. In Germany, calves are kept on-farm for 28 days after birth.

The main conference was a jam-packed event with exceptionally good calf research presentations. The overall feeling in the room was positive. When so many like-minded people are together in one room it is amazing the conversations that take place. Colostrum was hands down the basis of a lot of research with continued research being conducted on bioactives and the benefits to calves.

Colostrum is much more than passive transfer; the focus should be on more than immunoglobulin G (IgG). The gut is still able to absorb bioactives after 12 hours. There was a recommendation to feed 50 per cent colostrum and 50 per cent milk for days two to three after birth, leading to increased intestinal development, increased IgG for longer than 12 hours after birth, and a demonstrated decrease in mortality. By days two to 14 there was an increase in body weight and average daily gain and a



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decrease in mortality. The latest research indicates calves should be fed colostrum for five days. Caution was given on using a Brix refractometer on colostrum; it is not accurate.

In addition to the calf health research topics there was a significant amount of research around welfare and social licence. There is a definite trend towards keeping calves longer with their dams, feeding colostrum longer and feeding more milk, and pair housing, which is stemming from societal expectations. The researchers clearly outlined from their observations if we want to continue doing business in the future, there will need to be social licensing for calves. There will need to be more research conducted on the barriers to overcome some of these changes on farms. Calf pairing plays a role in the development of calves – science shows that paired calves gain more weight and adapt better to changing environmental conditions.

Overall, the conference was worthwhile attending and will be held in two years in Canada; the organizing committee is looking at Banff. There was a lot to be learned and a fantastic way to keep our knowledge transfer work current and fresh. This event takes place on the opposite years of the Healthy Calf Conference and is a great compliment for those who attend both.

If you are not following Calf Care Corner on Facebook and Twitter, be sure to do so to learn more about what science is telling us about calf raising. Many of these topics and more will be shared through our knowledge transfer. ■



New housing systems with outdoor access for veal calves

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OBJECTIVES

In France, the veal calf production is organized around specialized fattening farms, mostly in closed buildings with dynamic ventilation. Young calves are collected from farms (mostly dairy farms) at an average age of 28 days, then placed in fattening farms, in a context of a structural decrease of its production and consumption, veal calves' production must respond to new societal expectations concerning the evolution of calves' housing conditions. As the main priority for farmers is to provide animals with outdoor access. One of the objectives of Renouveau study was to test a new veal calves' production method.

MATERIAL & METHODS

Traditional housing: Closed building, Collective pen, Wooden slatted floor.

Collective system: Light and mobile structure, Composed of a covered run and an open lot.

These replicate trials of 40 male Holstein calves each were conducted at the veal calves' experimental station of the French Livestock Institute (INRAE), France, to cover different climatic conditions. The calves (n=120) were randomly batched based on their live-weight and age on arrival at the station (23 calves per batch) and were fattened for 24 weeks. Calves in both batches followed the same feeding plan and health protocol. Activity, growth performance, feed intake, calf health and carcass characteristics were measured.

RESULTS

■ Growth performance and feed intake were similar between the two batches (p>0.05).
■ The calves were not sick in the open lot, neither in summer nor in winter.
■ The calves were slightly lighter and more muscular in the open lot.
■ Regarding calf behaviour, calves in open lot spent more time running (>50%), moved twice as much, but showed more stress during their time in closed buildings.

THE FUTURE: an experimental farm to test new breeding models for calves

The Calveo Innovation and Research Center (CIRCAL), Brittany, France, is unique in Europe. With a capacity of 400 places, the CIRCAL is built up of 5 units, including a production unit composed of "prototype" farm buildings to test the future and the breeding of new breeding models for calves and a "calf" reception unit.

OPENLOT: 16 places, natural ventilation, outdoor access, concrete floor, covered pasture.

LOT: 5 rooms of 24 places, dynamic centralised ventilation, on wooden slatted floor, precision feeding.

ISOLOTS: 40 places in 10 places of 10 places, composed of a covered run and an open lot.

ENCLOSURE: 2 rooms of 16 places, dynamic centralised ventilation, on wooden slatted floor, troughs and milk bars.

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Taking a fresh look at solutions for dealing with deadstock



Lilian Schaer

For the Livestock Research Innovation Corporation

It's a reality of livestock farming that sometimes, animals die on the farm. When that happens, those animals must be handled and disposed of responsibly and properly – but there has been little change in the tools available to farmers to do so.

In Ontario, the livestock industry primarily relies on rendering, but increasing restrictions are making on-farm management of deadstock challenging. Livestock Research Innovation Corporation (LRIC), with funding from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), is currently leading a study to revisit the deadstock issue in the province in hopes of finding new solutions to this long-time challenge.

The project focuses specifically on day-to-day mortality on the farm and not mass casualty events like disease outbreaks where large numbers of animals have to be disposed of; planning for these scenarios is already taking place.

Driving forces behind the deadstock – or fallen stock as it is also called – challenge include escalating costs that have made on-farm pick-up uneconomical across a large part of Ontario, and limited pick-up options for animals euthanized with barbiturates. The landscape started changing dramatically after bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) hit in 2003, leading to increasing regulations and restrictions on what was acceptable for collection as well as limiting products of value produced by rendering.

Study lead Jennifer MacTavish has consulted with close to 70 individuals and organizations over the course of the project and has completed an international scan as part of her search for information and solutions to the issue.

"Ontario farmers have options; none of them are great, but we do have options," says MacTavish. "And in looking outside of our borders, nobody has a silver bullet or a solution that we're not already doing or haven't already thought of."

Rendering remains the preferred solution for deadstock, a biosecure process that kills pathogens and results in usable end products. Other solutions include burial and composting – which are used by many Ontario producers but come with the caveat "if done properly" and aren't feasible options in the winter months. Incineration is another option, but one that is no longer allowed in some countries like the United Kingdom due to negative public perceptions.

Considering One Health, which is the interaction of human, animal and environmental health, more people than just agriculture should be sitting at the table, including groups like Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, or Ministry of Natural Resources.

According to MacTavish, her research has shown there is a lack of consistent investment in developing capacity, regulations impacting handling and disposal of deadstock lie within five different provincial acts, and there is a lack of a coordinated approach and no consistent solutions across the livestock sectors.

"We have 12 different groups that touch deadstock in some way, but they don't necessarily touch each other, and nobody is talking to each other," says MacTavish, adding that one of the hoped-for outcomes of the project is to bring all the stakeholders together to contribute to a search for solutions.

Labour and profitability are challenges for everyone, and the sector is also at the mercy of international decisions, such as when the European Union decided to decrease the volume of hides it is willing to import.

Ontario is a large province, so logistics and transportation costs are key factors that influence the availability and affordability of deadstock services for producers. Statistics show that the cost of a pickup more than 192 km away from a rendering plant is not economically feasible, for example.

However, there is value in deadstock from a variety of products ranging from animal feed, biogas and renewable diesel to collagen, furniture, and clothing. As well, finding solutions for deadstock has the support of government; Ontario has a variety of options, and there is the potential for developing a new circular economy around rendering.

"There's a need to think about the return on investment of deadstock when considering solutions, especially if the industry relies on for-profit businesses to provide these services," she says.

Companies currently providing deadstock services in various regions of Ontario include Barn Angels Composting in Georgetown, Atwood Resources in Atwood, and Sanimax ABP in St. Albert. Darling Ingredients out of Dundas also provides services, but only for swine and poultry.

The project was funded by OMAFRA in response to a request from Dairy Farmers of Ontario, Veal Farmers of Ontario, Beef Farmers of Ontario, Ontario Sheep Farmers and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture for help in addressing the livestock mortality issue with both short-term relief for farmers and long-term options that will result in practical and sustainable solutions.

Recommendations stemming from the research are currently being developed and a final report is expected by early summer. It will be available from LRIC once released. ■

This article is provided by Livestock Research Innovation Corporation as part of LRIC's ongoing efforts to report on research developments and outcomes, and issues affecting the Canadian livestock industry.

Manure stewardship video series available

Bruce Kelly, Program Consultant

Farm & Food Care Ontario

Did you know that how you store and handle manure can increase its value as fertilizer? Livestock farmers know manure is a critical part of their integrated farming system. With high fertilizer prices, now, more than ever, farmers need to look at ways to maximize the value of their manure. Investing in proper manure storage and handling systems is critical for a successful livestock operation.

Livestock farmers know that manure is rich in organic matter, microbiological activity, and varying amounts of nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium and a host of micronutrients. Depending on how the manure is stored and handled, a lot of that value can be lost before it even gets to the field. And if you find yourself with more manure than you need, the series explores ways to get added value by processing or moving it off the farm.

In 2022, with funding through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), Farm & Food Care Ontario (FFCO) developed a new manure stewardship video series. Over the winter of 2023, FFCO partnered with the Ontario Professional Agricultural Contractors Association to host several industry meetings to further industry discussion on these topics.

The series highlights best practices and new technology in manure storage

and application systems to improve efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas production. The three videos cover 'Storage & handling', 'Application' and 'Moving manure off the farm'.

The videos are available on FFCO's website and YouTube channel for farmers and applicators to view. You are invited to watch all three videos in the Manure Innovation series to investigate how to get the best out of current systems and explore innovative new technologies to increase dollar return, lower costs and potentially reduce greenhouse gas production. The videos will also be used by the University of Guelph in the training program for custom manure applicators licensing.

The video series was highlighted to the farm community in the winter of 2023 in a meeting series across the province on manure stewardship, both online and in Exeter, Moorefield and Kemptonville.

These meetings provided an opportunity for farmers and custom operators to look at new and modified application equipment and smarter storage systems that minimize nutrient loss, reduce rainwater dilution and improve the nutrient value of manure.

Check out the three-video series on YouTube: <https://www.farmfoodcareon.org/timing-matters/>

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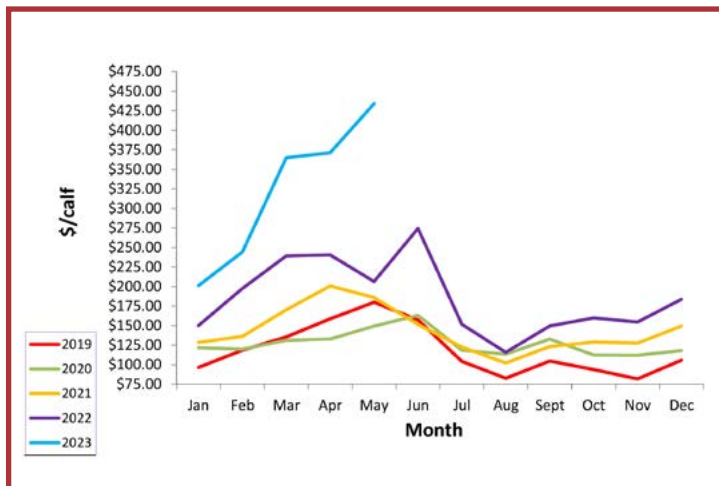
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Veal Market Information

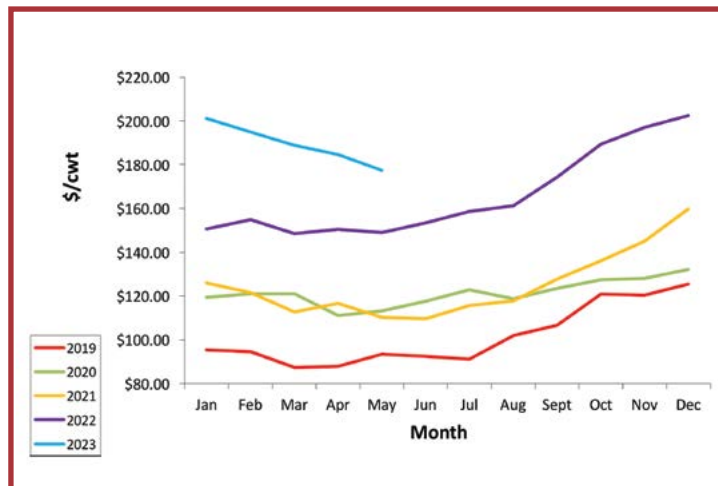
This information is collected from various sources and disseminated by Veal Farmers of Ontario.

Bob Calf Pricing



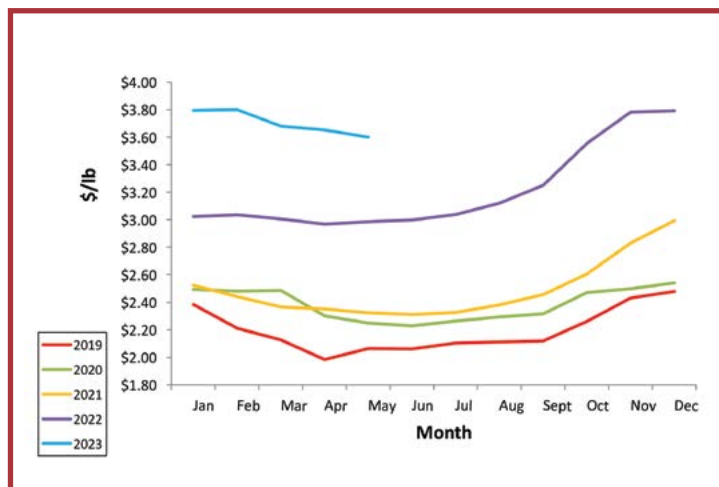
This price range is collected and tabulated from participating sale barns throughout Ontario based on average pricing. This information is used to follow trends.

Sale Barn Veal Pricing



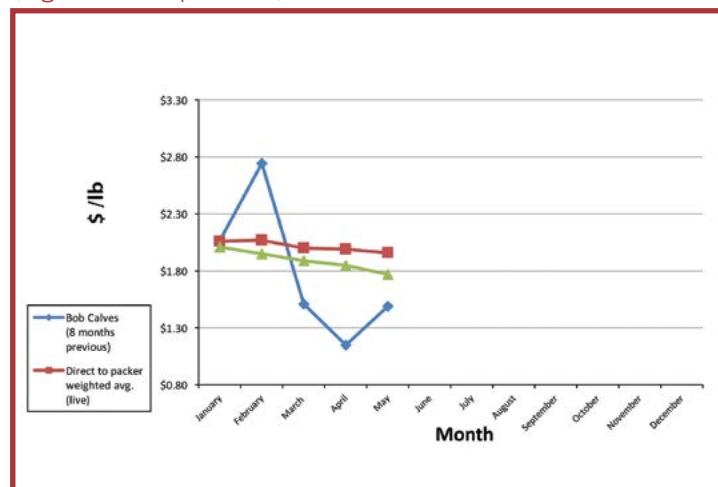
This price range is collected and tabulated from participating sale barns throughout Ontario based on average pricing. This information is used to follow trends.

Rail Grade Veal Pricing

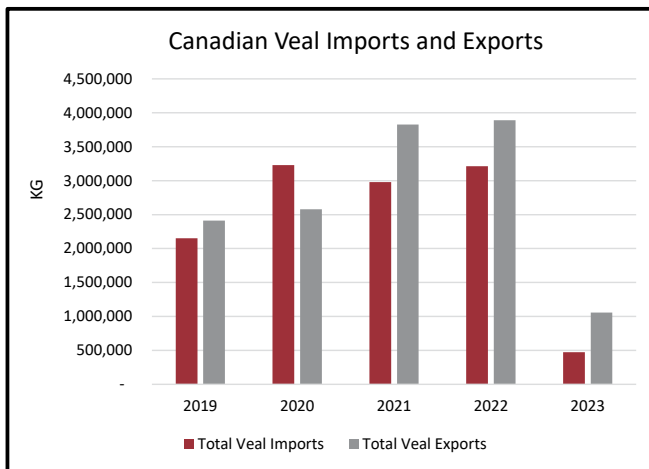


This information is collected from producer contributions on a weekly basis. Once the numbers are collected a weighted average is calculated. The weighted average gives a more realistic price of what is happening in the market. This information is used to follow trends.

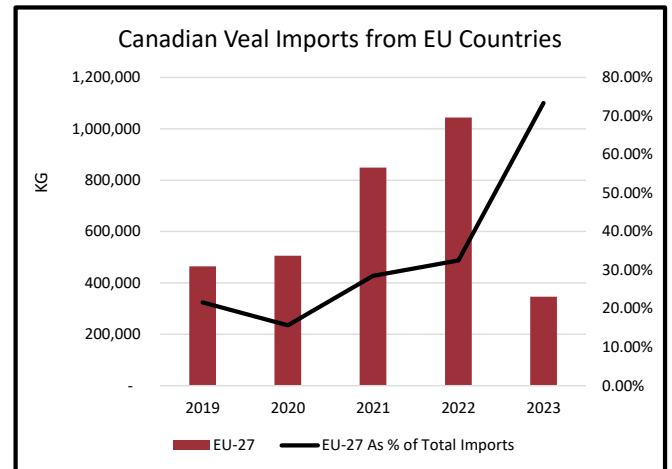
Finished price compared to bob calf prices (eight months previous)



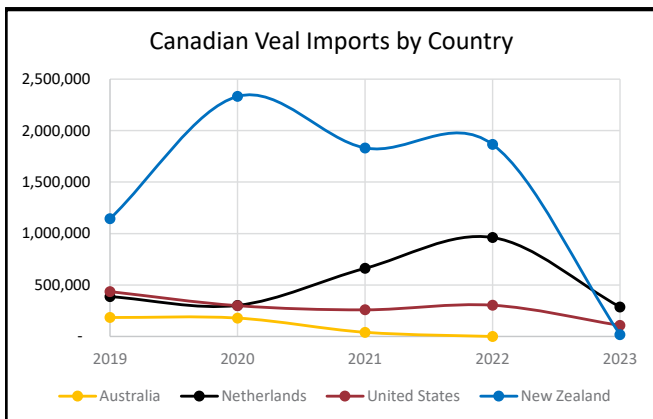
This graph is used to compare the finished price from both the sale barn and rail grade pricing to the bob calf prices eight months prior. This information could help when deciding on the purchase prices of calves and what market they will be shipped in. This information gives a quick glance at both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



Year to date, Canadian veal exports amounted to 1.06 million kgs, a year over year increase of 11% by volume and 33% by value. Additionally, veal imports increased in volume by 27% and 22% by value compared to 2022.



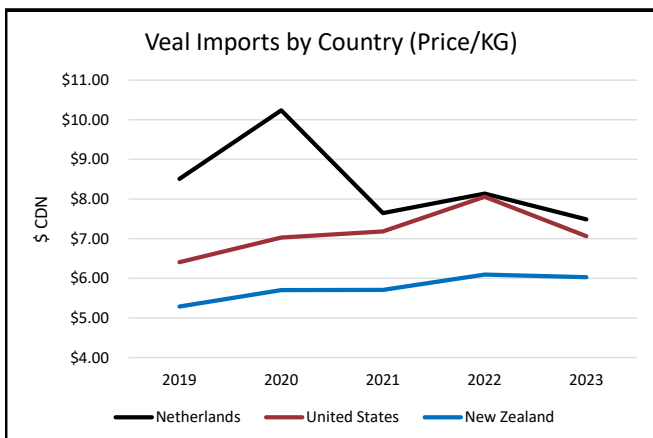
The volume of veal imports from the EU (red) has doubled compared to this time in 2022. This is equivalent to **73%** of Canada's veal imports thus far in 2023 (black line); continuing the large increases reported since 2018. The Netherlands is the predominant supplier of European imports, with smaller volumes imported from Italy.



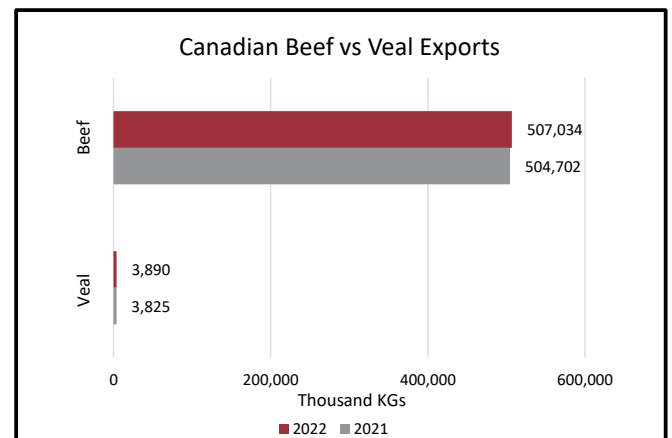
The Netherlands is now Canada's largest supplier of imported veal, followed by New Zealand. Imports from the USA continue to decline. No Australian imports have been reported. Larger import volumes from other EU countries are also being reported.



Veal exports to the USA increased by 11% year to date compared to 2022. The balance of Canada's veal exports, which have increased 8% YTD, are sent to the Middle East.



The per kg price of veal imported from the Netherlands has held reasonably steady in 2023 from 2022 at \$7.49/kg. The value of American cuts decreased from higher levels in 2022 to \$7.09/kg, while the value of New Zealand imports held steady at \$6.03/kg.



While veal represents just a small fraction of Canada's red meat trade, both veal and beef exports have marginally increased in 2022 compared to 2021.

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

Ontario VEAL appeal

Blackened Veal Burgers with Voodoo Relish

Cut: Ground/Minced | Servings: 8

Ingredients:

Voodoo Relish

2 large red bell peppers, cut in half and seeded
1 medium sweet onion, sliced into rounds
1 tbsp olive oil
4 hot red finger chili peppers
1 tbsp crushed red chili peppers
2 cloves garlic, minced
½ cup hot red pepper jelly
1 tsp hot sauce
Makes approximately 2 cups

Instructions:

Preheat grill to medium high approximately 450-550 degrees F. Brush peppers and onions lightly with olive oil. Grill peppers and onions for 10-15 minutes, turning occasionally until lightly charred and tender. Remove from grill and allow to cool.

Dice grilled red peppers, onion and red finger peppers and place in a medium sized saucepot. Add crushed red chilies, garlic, red pepper jelly and hot sauce. Bring mixture to a slow boil, stirring to keep from scorching. Season to taste with salt and pepper and set aside keeping warm. Remove from heat and cool. Cover and refrigerate until needed.

In a bowl combine icy cold ground veal, 2 tbsp BBQ seasoning rub, onion, garlic, and parsley. Form into six 4-ounce burgers, approximately ½ inch thick and 4 inches in diameter. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. Brush the burgers with melted butter and sprinkle liberally on both sides with remaining BBQ seasoning.

Preheat griddle pan on the BBQ to medium high heat or grill over direct heat. Place burgers onto hot griddle or grill and cook for 2 to 3 minutes per side until well done but still juicy. Toast Buns.

Assemble your burger. Add blackened veal burger, voodoo relish, smoked Cheddar cheese to your bun and garnish with your other favorite burger toppings or coleslaw! ■

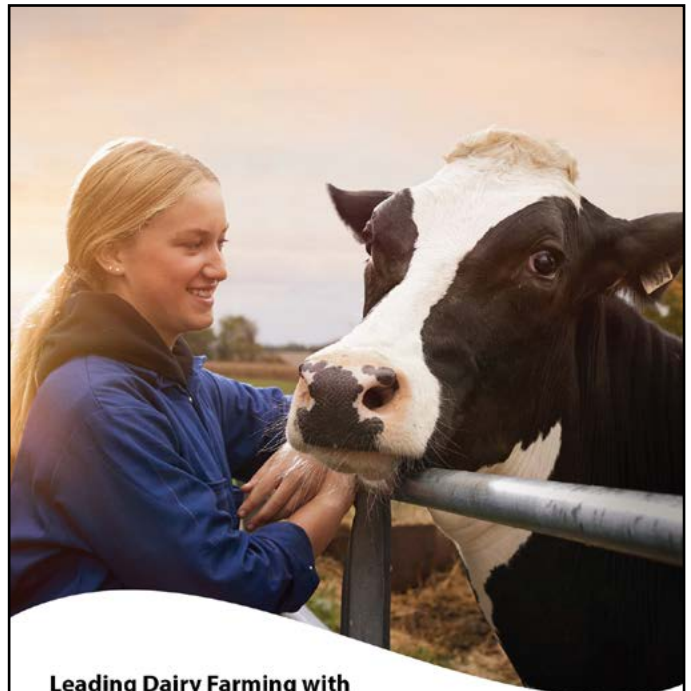
Source: Ted Reader BBQ

The Voodoo Relish adds a sweet heat to this mouthwatering veal burger. Watch the Godfather of the Grill, Chef Ted Reader, work his magic and grill up this tasty treat here: <https://bit.ly/cheftedvideo>



The Burger:

2 lbs ground Ontario Veal, kept icy cold
2 tbsp + 4 tbsp BBQ seasoning rub
½ cup finely diced onion
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
2 tbsp melted butter
6 buns
Smoked Cheddar Cheese, grated (optional)



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Licensed dealers

As a veal (bob calves, started/preconditioned calves, and finished veal cattle) producer, you should be dealing with licensed 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 licensed, ask to see the licence, check the Agricorn website at <https://bit.ly/Agricorndealers> or contact the VFO office.

Licence fee remittances

Regulation 58/15 (i) requires any person who receives veal cattle to deduct from the money payable for the veal cattle any licence fees payable to the local board by the person from whom the veal cattle is received and to forward the licence fees to the local board. Bob calves and preconditioned calves are considered veal cattle. This regulation also includes veal cattle that are sent for custom slaughter.

If you are purchasing male dairy and dairy crossbreed bob calves (up to 150 lbs.) and preconditioned intact male dairy and dairy crossbreed calves (up to 450 lbs.) licence fees are required. To help veal producers and to streamline efficiencies VFO will allow producers purchasing private treaty calves or sending veal for custom slaughter to fill out the Year End Licence Fee Remittance Worksheet.

This worksheet is only for finished veal producers, not dealers. Dealers are to remit monthly unless arrangements have been made with the VFO office. Form 5- List of Veal Cattle Sellers Information Report must accompany the Year End Licence Fee Remittance Worksheet.

If you require additional copies of the Year End Licence Fee Remittance Worksheet for 2023, Form 1 or Form 5, please visit the VFO Licence Fee forms page at <https://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 Licensing inquiries, must be directed to Agricorn. Visit <https://bit.ly/agricorp> or call 1-888-247-4999 for more information. ■

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