

THE Connection

Summer 2024 Volume 6, No. 2



VEAL
Farmers
of Ontario



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manage fines**

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dairy calves**

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**SAVE
the
DATE**

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Summer 2024 Volume 6, No. 2



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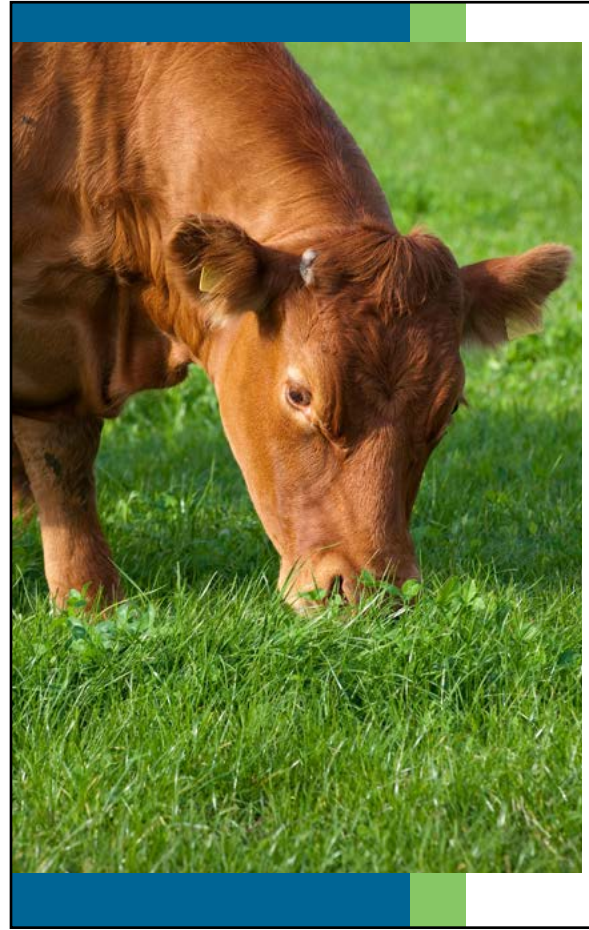
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Chair's MESSAGE



Philip Kroesbergen

VFO welcomes Minister Flack to OMAFA

With the recent provincial cabinet shuffle, we now have a new Ministry name – Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAF) and a new Minister – the Honourable Rob Flack. Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) welcomes Minister Flack to his new role, having previously served as Associate Minister of Housing as well as Parliamentary Assistant to Minister Lisa Thompson where VFO was fortunate to have worked with Minister Flack on a number of files.

VFO would like to thank Minister Thompson, who is now Minister of Rural Affairs, for her time spent working collaboratively with all of the various organizations. Minister Thompson will continue to be a champion for the Ontario agri-food sector at the cabinet table.

Minister Flack has hit the ground running in his new role hosting a roundtable of agricultural leaders ahead of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) meetings taking place in late July in Whitehorse. I was pleased to be able to represent VFO at this meeting where a number of important issues were raised. Topics covered in the roundtable discussions included federal issues impacting Ontario's farmers like labour, the carbon tax, market access, changes to capital gains exemptions, non-tariff trade barriers, and processing capacity.

So often we get focused on the issues right in front of us, so it was good to hear from our industry partners what issues they are working on and where there might be some synergies to work together on behalf of all our members. For VFO, being a smaller organization, it is important to have a presence at these meetings, not just to raise veal-specific issues but to develop relationships with the Minister's office and our industry partners. Sometimes the conversations we have before and after the meeting itself yield the greatest results.

Of course, with a new Minister at the helm, there is also a transition period where it is important for VFO to share our concerns and issues. Government relations and working with all levels of government to develop industry-led solutions is a top priority for VFO. Some of the key issues we will be sharing with Minister Flack include the changing dynamics of the cattle sector and its impact on the veal sector; investment in research and development to support the dairy calf and veal sectors; ensuring programs are in place to support young farmers coming into the sector; and business risk management programs.

VFO continues to work with our Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition (OASC) partners to lobby the province for an additional \$100 million investment into the Risk Management Program (RMP). The Veal RMP program is the veal sector's most important business risk management program and ensuring there are adequate funds within the RMP program to cover the risks that are beyond our control is our top priority. We look forward to meeting with Minister Flack to get this job done and funds into the RMP program.

If you are not enrolled in the Veal RMP program, please consider how this program might help your operation. The cost-share of your premiums on a per head basis and the government funding is critical to managing risk. For more information about the Veal RMP program check out the Agricorn website. You can also call VFO staff or your directors for more information.

I want to thank everyone for your support of the VFO licence fee increase that comes into effect on July 1, 2024. The additional funds from the licence fees are important for the organization to be able to continue to provide the high level of programs and service members have come to expect. We have all experienced the impact of inflationary costs and the licence fee increase now is an investment in the dairy calf and veal sector's future. ■

Licence fees increase July 1

Effective July 1, 2024, please be advised that the Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) licence fee will be increasing to \$7.50/head for every head of veal cattle sold as outlined in VFO's regulated definitions.

As outlined in *Ontario Regulation 58/15 Veal Cattle Marketing*, "veal cattle" means cattle produced in Ontario that consists of,

- a** male calves or freemartin female calves of any dairy breed or crossbreed, each weighing no more than 150 pounds (68 kilograms),
- b** intact male calves of any dairy breed or crossbreed, each weighing no more than 450 pounds (204.1 kilograms),
- c** calves of any breed, each weighing no more than 769 pounds (348.8 kilograms), that are sold for slaughter at an auction or through a livestock dealer, or
- d** calves of any breed that are sold for slaughter to a processor to be processed into a veal carcass within the meaning of section 304 of the *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations* (Canada). ("veaux de boucherie") O. Reg. 58/15, s. 1; O. Reg. 725/20, s. 1 (1).

Please ensure you update your reporting information and use the correct forms for VFO licence fee remittances. For updated forms, questions and more information please go to <https://vealfarmers.ca/about-us/licence-fees/> or contact us at inspection@vealfarmers.ca or 519-824-2942.

- Like increased costs on the farm, the costs associated with all facets of VFO, including those from our service providers, have also been impacted by inflationary increases. To maintain organizational viability and sustainability in fulfilling our mandate for all members, VFO has determined a licence fee increase is necessary at this time.
- With the increase in licence fees, VFO has prioritized two main areas for investment:
 - Priority research projects that will support Ontario's dairy calf and veal cattle farmers.
 - Expanding marketing efforts to leverage opportunities to maintain and grow consumer demand.
- The VFO Board of Directors, as a regulated marketing board, has the authority to raise (or lower) licence fees as outlined in the *Farm Products Marketing Act* and *Ontario Regulation 58/15 Veal Cattle Marketing*.
- This increase from \$5.50 to \$7.50 is consistent with the increased market prices being realized for both the dairy calves and finished veal cattle.
- This is the first increase in VFO licence fees since November 1, 2019.



Proactive leadership today is an investment for a resilient future. ■



Jennifer Haley

Proactive leadership today for a resilient future

Last year, as we worked through the process of updating the Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) strategic plan for 2024 to 2028, the board and staff evaluated where in the dairy calf and veal sectors there might be opportunities VFO could capitalize on to strengthen the sectors and build upon the work already underway. As well, we evaluated where there might also be threats to the dairy calf and veal sectors that should be minimized to reduce their impact or how those threats could be turned into opportunities with the right amount of focus and attention.

Updating VFO's strategic plan to take into consideration all of the factors and forces inside and outside the sector that impact not only farmers but the organization itself and ensuring the organization has the resources it needs to fulfil the strategic plan is part of what is required for proactive and engaged leadership for Ontario dairy calf and veal cattle farmers. With the VFO licence fee set to increase to \$7.50 per head on July 1, 2024, VFO has prioritized two main areas for additional investment – research and consumer marketing.

Our sector has been experiencing firsthand the huge changes the dairy calf and veal sector has seen in the past few years. As we ride the North American cattle market highs and lows, we need to keep our eye on consumer trends and find some balance between veal cattle production and the beef sector needs with both veal and beef sectors now using the same input of the dairy calf.

Demand for veal cattle remains strong thanks to the consumer, but we need to keep a consistent supply of Ontario veal cattle going to processors to retain market share for the veal category. The consumer has many choices for their centre-of-the-plate protein and if veal is not available when the consumer wants it then they will move onto something else. The consumer wants top quality local Ontario veal. If Ontario or Canadian veal doesn't supply the marketplace, then it will certainly come from somewhere and erode our sector's ability to maintain market share, so having a consistent supply of veal cattle together with a coordinated marketing strategy is strategically important.

VFO's consumer marketing strategy is multi-faceted with priorities in areas such as nutrition and health, public trust, recipe and cooking information, foodservice and restaurant support, retail support, and export development. From a marketing perspective, VFO's limited resources are

spent leveraging partnerships and collaborations that focus on those consumers already enjoying veal to eat and encouraging them to purchase more of it – adding additional veal consumption opportunities supports year-round consumption and demand for Ontario veal.

With additional funds, VFO can expand its consumer reach to build on the programs and initiatives and ensure Ontario veal remains top of mind with the consumer when grocery shopping or out at the restaurant; with the chef when building their menus; and retailers when they are filling their meat case. The Halal consumer is also making a big impact with new products coming to the market as this consumer segment continues to grow and evolve. Marketing is all about the push and pull of the consumer and ensuring the product is at the right place at the right time. The investment made by VFO to target its marketing efforts supports the entire veal supply chain.

While it is critical to have a consistent supply of calves being put into veal cattle production, it is also what we do with those calves to produce high-quality veal that matters as well. There is a lot to consider as a veal farmer – maintaining herd health and welfare, reducing the use of antibiotics, ensuring costs of production are kept in check, finding innovative solutions to on-farm challenges, animal housing, feed and nutrition to maximize carcass finish, and the list goes on.

As a dairy calf producer, the list can also be similar – ensuring both the cows and calves are healthy and vibrant, transfer of immunity, nutrition and looking at alternatives to using antibiotics, calf housing, and ensuring health and welfare.

A priority for VFO, to support our members, is investing in research projects and industry development initiatives that are focused on ensuring a consistent supply of healthy, quality calves, reducing costs of production, and maximizing the potential of every head of veal cattle put into production.

This year, VFO will also be undertaking a research priority-setting exercise where we will evaluate projects completed over the past several years and the outcomes, the current identified veal and dairy calf research priorities, and the research priorities identified as part of the update and review of the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Veal Cattle*. The goal of this exercise will be to update VFO's research priorities to reflect the needs of dairy calf and veal farmers today and into the future to harness



the opportunities identified in the strategic plan and mitigate against the challenges.

As part of the livestock sector's focus on research, VFO is a member of the Livestock Research Innovation Corporation (LRIC) which focuses on collaboration with researchers across a number of disciplines and institutions to identify project and funding opportunities. With this network of colleagues, VFO also collaborates with the University of Guelph and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) Research Alliance that invests in a number of livestock-focused projects.

With additional research funds available, VFO will look to leverage other sources of funding and invest in projects that will identify on-farm real time solutions to production challenges. Whether through a call for proposals, partnerships, or industry-led projects, VFO will continue to support

research that will focus on the future of dairy calf and veal cattle production.

With a strategic focus on research and consumer marketing initiatives that will support the dairy calf and veal sector, VFO remains focused on providing leadership to promote industry development through collaboration and communications. If you have any suggestions for what type of research would benefit your dairy calf or veal cattle operations, or if you have an innovative idea that would solve a challenge on-farm, please let us know. Your VFO board and staff are strategically prioritizing investments in key projects, providing proactive leadership for today, while focused on a robust and resilient future. ■

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From farm to future: Insights from the Texas Tech Beef X Dairy Symposium



Kendra Keels,
Industry Development Director

From May 14 to 16, I had the pleasure of attending the Texas Tech Beef X Dairy Symposium in Lubbock, Texas, as a guest of Hampel's Calf-Tel. This conference featured a diverse line-up of academic speakers, industry leaders, and technical experts who shared their research and experience in raising, feeding, and marketing dairy-beef. Topics covered included calfhood management, genomics/genetics, gut and liver health, feedlot performance, and product composition and quality. The symposium brought together like-minded individuals from the dairy-beef industry to learn from each other and explore ways to improve management practices.

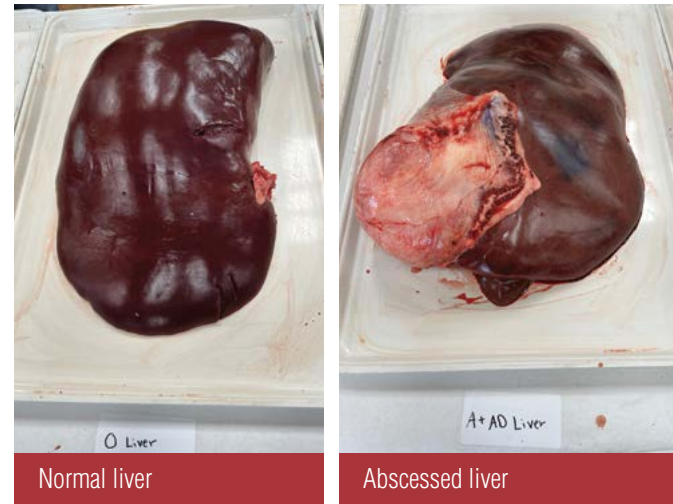
The symposium started with a beef packing plant tour at Caviness Beef Packers in Hereford, Texas, where they process both dairy-beef and traditional beef each week. The tour covered all aspects of their operation, from the holding pens to the coolers, showcasing an impressive set-up. It was highlighted that dairy-beef animals have a higher percentage of liver abscesses compared to traditional beef.

Learning about the economic impact of liver abscesses was eye-opening. Grain-fed veal also experiences liver abscesses, but the issue is not as widely discussed. Liver abscesses were referred to as a billion-dollar issue, costing the processing industry time and labour due to line slowdowns. Abscesses also affect animal performance, resulting in poor growth and welfare. In severe cases, liver abscesses adhere to the diaphragm, making breathing difficult and causing valuable cuts like the outside skirt to be discarded.

The outside skirt is a highly-desired cut of meat because it is tender, less coarse, and rich in flavor. There are only two per animal, and it is more expensive than the tenderloin. This cut is particularly popular in Mexico for fajitas. Each liver abscess reduces average daily gains, feed efficiency, dressing percentage, and carcass yields, impacting both beef and grain-fed veal.

Liver abscesses are scored from 0 to A+ based on severity:

0	no abscesses
A-	1 or 2 small abscesses
A	multiple little or 1 or 2 large abscesses
A+	multiple large abscesses



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More research is needed as the dairy-beef market continues to grow. Most of the symposium was similar to the Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) Healthy Calf Conference, with presentations on colostrum, milk feeding, and welfare. These are the same challenges we face starting calves here in Ontario. The importance of adequate colostrum for calf health was emphasized, aligning with VFO's calf care extension. Biosecurity was another key topic, with concerns about Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza outbreaks on Texas dairy farms.

Discussions on sustainability, carbon footprint, and carbon credits posed additional challenges for beef producers. There is pressure to adopt sustainable practices and improve biosecurity measures, which will enhance herd health and position the industry positively in terms of social responsibility.

Conclusion

The Texas Tech Beef X Dairy Symposium was a valuable experience, offering insights highly relevant to veal producers. The discussions on liver abscesses were particularly enlightening, highlighting the significant economic impact and the need for improved management practices. Understanding the severity and prevalence of liver abscesses in both dairy-beef and veal cattle underscores the importance of proactive health monitoring and preventive measures.

Emphasis on calfhood management, colostrum, milk feeding, and welfare underscored the foundational aspects of raising healthy calves, directly correlating with the quality and efficiency of veal production. The focus on sustainability, carbon footprint, and biosecurity highlighted emerging challenges that veal producers should be aware of.

Overall, the symposium provided a wealth of knowledge and fostered connections with industry peers and experts. The insights gained will undoubtedly help refine management practices, improve animal health and performance, and ensure the long-term sustainability of the veal industry.

Special thanks to Hampel's Calf-Tel for the invitation and to all organizers and speakers for a truly enriching and informative symposium.

See the photo below for the scary uninvited guest.

As we were completing the plant tour, we were all being organized for a group photo when this guy decided to participate. ■



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Fine-tuning rations to manage fines

Megan Van Schaik, Beef Cattle Specialist

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness

One of the biggest challenges of feeding high-energy rations to ruminants is managing the risk of digestive disorders, particularly acidosis. For beef and grain-fed veal cattle, the biggest risk of acidosis occurs in the last phase of a feeding program (finishing), when high-energy rations are offered to achieve maximum gain. Acidosis is a condition characterized by low rumen pH (typically defined as pH <5.6) for a prolonged period of time. Acidosis leads to a whole host of issues, including impaired rumen motility, reduced nutrient absorption, and inconsistent feed intake. Since prolonged exposure to high acidity damages the rumen wall, bacteria and toxins can pass through the rumen wall and enter the bloodstream, causing issues elsewhere in the body like the liver and feet (presenting as liver abscesses and laminitis/founders, respectively). With obvious health and welfare concerns, and economic consequences, reducing the risk of acidosis should be top of mind for any producer finishing cattle.

There are a number of factors that influence the risk of acidosis, including forage proportion and particle size, grain type, extent of grain processing, feed additives used, bunk management, duration on feed, dietary transition and adaption, and feed sorting. This article will dial-in on a factor that tends to be a thorn in a producer's – and feed pellet manufacturer's – side: fine particles. Fine particles or “fines” are small feed particles that can be rapidly digested in the rumen and can increase the risk of acidosis, particularly if they're small starch particles coming from grains. Fines from pellets can also contain micro ingredients (like minerals and vitamins), and if fines are sorted against by cattle, inconsistent intake of these micro ingredients can be an issue.

Sources of fine particles

When it comes to finding fines in a whole-shelled corn and protein pellet ration commonly offered to finishing veal cattle, it is easy to jump to the conclusion that pellet quality must be the culprit. While pellet quality certainly can contribute to the level of fines in a ration, pellets are not the only potential source. Where processed grains are included in a beef or veal ration, overprocessing is known to generate an excessive amount of fines, particularly when grains are dry-rolled. It's important to remember that even whole corn can contain fines – especially if it hasn't been cleaned. Feeding whole corn as opposed to processed corn reduces risk of acidosis, but the level of fines found in whole corn can change year to year and even load to load depending on the harvest, drying, storage, and handling conditions of the crop.



Image 1 – Sample of whole-shelled corn with fine particles visible.

Quantifying fines from grains

There are a number of ways to measure grain particle size distribution and level of fines in your ration:

- *Quantify the proportion of fines with a sieve screen*

Probably the simplest and most practical option for corn and pellet-based veal finishing rations, a representative sample can be evaluated for proportion of fines using a screen with known sized openings (e.g. 1.0 to 1.4 mm) and a known quantity of sample. You can also use this strategy to measure the level of fines in other ration ingredients.

- *Manual sieve stack/Relative Corn Index*

A sieve stack that can be taken on-farm to assess particle size distribution in processed grain samples. The sieve stack consists of sieve mesh sizes of #4 (4.75 mm), #8 (2.4 mm), #16 (1.01 mm), #30 (0.54 mm), and a bottom pan. The Relative Corn Index (RCI) was developed by Dr. Mike Hutjens (University of Illinois) and can be used as a relative measure to monitor particle size distribution in grains. This is a quick assessment that can be done on-farm and is particularly helpful in monitoring changes in particle size distribution.

- *RoTap sieving*

This is the standard laboratory method for determining particle size distribution for processed grains. This method involves a sieve stack, including 13 sieves and a bottom pan, and automated sieving motion. The RoTap procedure allows for calculation of the mean particle size and standard deviation of the sample. This procedure generates quantitative



Image 2 – Sieve stack used to determine the RCI. Sieves can be used to assess the level of fines in a grain sample.



Image 3 – Corn screen used to screen out fine particles before feed-out at Zach Harper's veal operation. Photo credit: Zach Harper

measures but is time consuming, and both inconvenient and impractical for on-farm use. Most feed mills have a RoTap to assess particle size distribution, but it typically stays at the mill.

Other methods of measuring the extent of grain processing include using a processing index, often used in Western Canada for processed small grains, and flaking density, which is a bulk density measurement for steam-flaked grains.

Proactively managing fines

Pellet quality can contribute to a build-up of fines in the ration. It's important to have a conversation with your feed representative if you notice an influx of fines from your pellets. Feed mills tend to be mindful of pellet quality, but least-cost formulation exercises can inadvertently impact pellet quality. But don't jump to conclusions so quickly! Storage and handling conditions on-farm can impact how well pellets hold up until they reach the feed bunk. Consider points where breakage can occur on-farm including transportation, auguring, mixing, and feed-out, and look for steps that can be taken to reduce impact to the integrity of the pellet. Moisture can also threaten the integrity of the pellet. Be sure to store pellets in a clean, dry environment. Avoid storing pellets near any sources of moisture to prevent moisture-wicking.

Similarly, consider factors on-farm that can contribute to fines accumulating in stored corn. Harvesting, drying, storage, and handling can impact the amount of fines that show up in a crop of corn. Corn can be cleaned to reduce the amount of dust and fines in the crop. Some producers use a screen to sieve out any fines immediately before the corn is fed-out (see Image 3).

Offering fresh feed daily can help prevent pellets from absorbing too much moisture from the environment and other feed ingredients that make up the ration. Clean out feed bunks frequently to prevent fines from

building up and spoiling. Observe the level of fines leftover in feed bunks and record your observations to better track and manage fines in your rations. Don't forget to walk pens and check manure consistency for any signs of digestive upsets. ■

References available upon request.

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Colostrum management: An important part of mitigating disease in dairy calves

Dr. Cynthia Miltenburg

on behalf of the Ontario Animal Health Network

The importance of colostrum for newborn calves cannot be underestimated. There have been countless studies, articles, and presentations on the integral role it plays in calf development, yet there remain challenges to ensure we meet our targets in a way that provides calves with optimal protection without additional risk of disease.

Colostrum is the only source of early immunity for calves because immune protection cannot be transmitted across the placenta. When colostrum is provided from the dam to her own calf, it provides targeted protection for the pathogens in that herd. In addition to providing essential immune active substances, colostrum is rich in fat and protein and is the calf's first source of nourishment.

Firstly, an appropriate colostrum program involves feeding calves three to four litres (depending on breed and size) promptly after birth. Ideally this should occur within the first hour, but no later than six hours, after birth. The quality of colostrum, which refers to having a high concentration of immunoglobulins AND a low concentration of bacteria, is also important. Lower immunoglobulin concentration can be associated with younger dams, a short dry period, or cows who have suffered from illness, heat stress, or leaking prior to calving. Colostrum can easily be tested on-farm to verify its quality with a Brix refractometer. Guidelines recommend feeding colostrum that measures ≥ 22 per cent. Finally, it's important to collect and feed colostrum in a hygienic manner which includes collecting from a clean udder prepped as for milking, and utilizing properly cleaned and disinfected buckets, bottles, nipples, and feeding tubes to avoid bacterial contamination during harvest or delivery.

While the feeding of colostrum can provide targeted protection against disease, there are also some diseases in the cow herd that can be transmitted to the calf through the colostrum if they are present in the adult cows. This makes colostrum delivery a risk factor for infecting the calf. Some pathogens that can be shed directly into colostrum and passed to the calf include *Mycobacterium avium paratuberculosis* (MAP), the causative agent of Johne's Disease, *Salmonella* Dublin (SD), and bovine

leukemia virus (BLV). These pathogens and others such as *E. coli* or other *Salmonella* species may also contaminate colostrum from manure and the environment. While producers are undertaking efforts to reduce these diseases in their herd, refining their colostrum delivery program is an important part of the long-term plan. In addition to the risk of transmitting disease, the presence of pathogens in colostrum can interfere with the absorption of colostrum antibodies.

Pasteurization is an established method to reduce microorganisms and reduce bacterial contamination of milk. Pasteurization of colostrum is a more sensitive procedure because we need to preserve the antibodies while also reducing pathogen load. Over the last decade, important research has been conducted on how to best achieve this. What we have learned is that the protocol used is critical to avoid ruining the colostrum. On average, the bacterial load can be reduced without reducing immunoglobulin concentrations by heating bovine colostrum to 60°C for 30 to 60 minutes. Given this difference in protocol from pasteurizing milk, it may be more appropriate to call the colostrum heat-treated rather than pasteurized.

In general, when utilizing a protocol as above, feeding heat-treated colostrum compared to untreated does not affect the immunoglobulin concentration in the serum of calves – most studies show no difference or a slight increase in immunoglobulin concentration in the serum of calves fed heat-treated colostrum. This means that we can still count on calves absorbing the immunoglobulin and receiving adequate immune protection. However, it's important to note as already mentioned, there are many factors that can affect absorption including volume fed and time of first feeding. These elements of the program remain critical, regardless of whether colostrum is heat-treated or not.

Collectively, studies have shown other calf health and growth benefits including a higher average daily gain, lower prevalence of pneumonia and diarrhea, and lower mortality among calves fed heat-treated colostrum and pasteurized milk compared to calves fed untreated colostrum and milk, even after accounting for successful immunity transfer.

The technology to heat-treat individual colostrum feedings on-farm has improved, making it more practical. Some studies have examined heat-treating and feeding individual colostrum from each dam, whereas others use pooled first colostrum from multiple dams that may or may not include the dam of the calf receiving it. From a disease transmission perspective, there are benefits to using single source colostrum and research has shown that absorption may occur differently between these two scenarios. However, from a practical perspective, when colostrum has to be harvested, heated for 30 to 60 minutes and cooled down before feeding, it extends the time to feeding a calf. Therefore, most farms that undertake feeding heat-treated colostrum feed colostrum from a previous dam that calved.

Even with these advances, there are some farms where heat-treating may not be an option. However, changes can still be made to reduce risk of transmitting diseases such as MAP, BLV, and SD from mature cows to calves. As previously mentioned, preparing the udder for milking is important to avoid contamination from manure that may contain these pathogens. Pooling untreated colostrum is not advised, and calves should receive colostrum only from a dam of known negative disease status. Herds can use an annual screening program for MAP or BLV to identify healthy, low risk dams. Colostrum from positive or ill cows should be discarded. For other diseases such as *E. coli*, rotavirus, and coronavirus that cause calf diarrhea, vaccination of the adult cows during the dry period can maximize the amount of antibodies calves receive against these pathogens in the colostrum.

Since the detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in lactating dairy cattle in the U.S., there has been much discussion on the safety of feeding untreated colostrum or milk to calves. This is an emerging disease in dairy cattle and there is still a great deal to learn about the transmission risk to cattle, including calves. Dairy cattle with HPAI have been found to have high levels of virus in their milk. Abnormal milk or colostrum (flakes, clots, or gross alteration in appearance) and milk or colostrum from sick or treated cows should always be discarded and not fed to calves. The current recommendation from the Food and Drug Administration in the U.S is that colostrum or milk fed to calves be pasteurized to kill harmful bacteria or viruses, such as influenza, before feeding.

Different herds will have different disease challenges – the herd veterinarian is best positioned to identify the practices that will protect calves and can be feasibly instituted by the herd considering the pathogens of greatest concern, supply of calves, and tools available. These decisions will not only protect calf health in early life, but the future longevity of the herd. ■

References available upon request.



The Bovine Ontario Animal Health Network is a group of veterinarians and specialists working in government, university research and laboratory, 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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Stepping strong: Best practices for veal cattle foot and leg health



Ask **Kendra**

Kendra Keels
Industry Development Director

The surfaces that veal cattle stand, walk, and lie on significantly impact their well-being. Proper flooring and bedding choices influence animal comfort, movement, thermoregulation, and overall health. Thermoregulation is the temperature range at which an animal uses no additional energy to maintain its core body temperature. This is called the thermoneutral zone and key to the well-being of veal cattle. It is affected by flooring and bedding choices, to name a few.

Maintaining healthy feet and legs in veal cattle is an integral part of proper care and management directly impacting productivity. Healthy cattle grow efficiently, resulting in better production outcomes. Following the requirements and recommended practices found in the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Veal Cattle* (the Code) can help to maintain optimal growth rates and reduces losses due to lameness or other health issues.

Different flooring types significantly impact the well-being of veal cattle. A requirement of flooring is that it must be designed and maintained to minimize slipping and injury.

To evaluate if the flooring type is working in the barn, animals should be evaluated for bursitis at the time of shipping to calculate the overall foot and leg health of the group.

Bursitis

Bursitis is an inflammatory reaction within a bursa. A bursa is a closed, fluid-filled sac that works as a cushion and gliding surface to reduce friction between tissues of the body. The main area observed when assessing bursitis in veal cattle is the hock, the joint on the back leg of a bovine.

Bursitis is generally characterized by swelling, local heat, and pain on palpation (to touch the area). Research suggests that veal cattle have more bursitis and carpal joint swelling on hard flooring (concrete slats, perforated concrete) than on soft flooring (rubber slots, slats with rubber cover, or perforated rubber mats). In one epidemiological study on young veal cattle, a higher risk for bursitis was reported for calves on wooden slats (1.5 times higher) and on concrete (four times higher) compared to straw or rubber at two weeks before harvest.



The research also states that a space allowance of less than 1.8 m² per animal is associated with a higher prevalence of bursitis.

As finished veal cattle are being loaded on trucks, special attention should be paid attention to the hocks. A requirement in the Code is that corrective action is necessary if the number of animals with bursitis exceeds 15 per cent in three consecutive cycles before shipping.

When doing daily pen checks keep an eye on veal cattle for injuries related to flooring or facility design (e.g., hairless patches, lameness, knee and hock swelling) for early detection.

Below are a few best management practices to consider when improving the rates of bursitis.

- Choose non-slip but not overly abrasive flooring types.
- Avoid bare concrete slatted flooring; provide softer options with good drainage (e.g., rubber-coated flooring, perforated rubber mats, or access to bedded areas).
- Aim for less than 10 per cent bursitis prevalence in finished veal.
- Ensure solid flooring slopes appropriately for effective drainage.
- Have a section of the pen that provides a bedded area for cattle.

By following these practices, veal producers can promote optimal foot and leg health, ensuring the well-being of their animals. The choices made regarding flooring directly influence animal comfort. Proper management practices, as outlined in the Code, provide a framework for maintaining optimal conditions.

Implementing these best practices not only enhances the welfare of veal cattle but also contributes to better growth rates and reduces the incidence of lameness and other health-related losses. Regular inspections, appropriate corrective actions, and consistent adherence to recommended guidelines ensure a high standard of care.

By prioritizing the well-being of veal cattle through proper flooring and bedding management, veal producers can achieve sustainable and efficient production, benefiting both the animals and the industry. ■

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European Union deforestation regulations will impact Canadian veal sector



Jennifer Haley
Executive Director



Add another roadblock to the long list of complications for the Canadian cattle sector to have access to the European market that was supposed to happen with the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) in September 2017.

New regulations aimed at promoting the consumption of 'deforestation-free' products came into effect on June 29, 2023, with an 18-month implementation deadline of December 2024 that will make it even harder for those in the Canadian cattle supply chain to export to the European Union (EU).

According to information posted by the EU promoting the consumption of 'deforestation-free' products and reducing the EU's impact on global deforestation and forest degradation, greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity loss will be reduced. The regulation is part of the EU's broader

commitment outlined in the European Green Deal, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and the Farm to Fork Strategy.

The main concerns of these policies are the expansion of agricultural land that is linked to the production of commodities like cattle, wood, cocoa, soy, palm oil, coffee, rubber and some of their derived products such as leather, chocolate, tires, or furniture. The EU feels that they are partly responsible for the problem as a major consumer of the commodities that are linked to deforestation and feel that these policies will help find a solution.

But what does this really mean for Canadian cattle producers? There is very little beef or veal being exported into the EU at this time because of the EU's already restrictive trade barriers so does this impact the cattle sector? Yes, and there will be ripple effects of this new legislation. For

example, even though there is no beef or veal meat being exported, Canada exports hides, particularly calf hides, to the EU for the lucrative luxury leather market.

'Deforestation-free' for cattle hides means that the cattle must not be raised on land that was deforested or converted from forest to agricultural use after December 31, 2020. As well, any feedstuffs containing soy or palm oil that are grown and fed to cattle or purchased for feed formulations, must not be grown on deforested land.

The responsibility for compliance will rest with the company that is placing the product on the EU market but like everything, the primary company will need to ensure that they have the required data collection all through the supply chain to ensure compliance. In the case of hides, the importer will be responsible for collecting the detailed information and will also have regular audits.

If the importer needs data to prove that the hides conform to the EU's deforestation regulations, what will they need from the supply chain? That is the work currently underway to determine the level of detail that is required. The North American hide sector is concerned that the data they will need does not even exist. There are some suggestions that there will need to be data for each individual hide that can be traced back to the farm of birth to prove that the farm locations are compliant and that the feedstuffs are also compliant. But where does this data come from? The EU is requiring 'geolocation' data of each farm to demonstrate that the product has not been produced on deforested land.

The Canadian cattle sector – beef, veal, and dairy – does not have a repository of each farm with geolocations catalogued and ready for use. And what about the feed? Cash crop farms that grow soy beans that are part of livestock feed formulations will also need to be geotagged. And then, what about the imported soy or palm oil that Canadian feed manufacturers use? Well, apparently that must be geotagged as well to confirm that the land used in those countries where the feed ingredients were grown was not deforested.

Who will collect this data at the farm level? Where will it be stored? Who pays for the data collection? How will data be accessed by the partners in the supply chain that need to provide the documentation? If the EU hide importers do not have access to the North American market, where will our hides go? The EU relies on North American hides for their luxury leather market. Will the hides end up in China at the devalued lower prices on the commodity market? Research has shown that cattle hide values, as well as other cattle processing byproducts, directly influence cattle prices paid to farmers.

What is frustrating for many is also the fact that much of the EU position and policy is targeted to those countries where massive deforestation has taken place, but all imports are painted with the same regulatory brush.

Even with no Canadian veal being traded into the EU because of other trade barriers, the calf hides were still being bought from Canadian processors and sold into the EU leather market. The hide buyers are going to have to find a way to comply with the EU regulations which will come at a cost, or potentially lose markets in the EU and be forced to sell to lower-valued markets which will also come at a cost. Cost cuts always go down the supply chain so this will potentially end up impacting the prices paid to farmers for their cattle.

There is a bumpy road ahead as more information will need to become available as the industry explores ways in which to ensure compliance. The Canadian Veal Association (CVA) supports the ongoing dialogue between Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the EU. The CVA also supports the collaboration amongst the cattle supply chain to identify solutions that will support the hide brokers and importers to continue to have access to the EU leather market. ■

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Building connections and engagements with the veal consumer through the power of social media

Jennifer Haley, Executive Director and
Cara Ferguson, Edana Integrated Marketing

In today's fast-paced digital marketing landscape, Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) has strategically leveraged social media to create a cohesive, impactful strategy that drives positive consumer engagement and strengthens retailer and restaurant relationships. By blending creative campaigns like the "flyer features" on Meta, #VealOnTheGrill with Chef Ted Reader, and the widely successful Ontario's Best Veal Sandwich Mystery Judge search, we've cultivated a passionate community of veal enthusiasts, dramatically boosting our online presence and reinforcing our brand. This strategic approach not only showcases veal in innovative ways but also fosters invaluable industry connections, proving that real human interaction can yield powerful marketing results.

One of the successful initiatives is our weekly "flyer features" campaign, where we design Meta (Instagram and Facebook) stories to highlight current retail veal features and specials. The stories promote the veal cut on feature, driving consumers to the specific store location. The stories are also integrated with relevant veal recipes that match the cut on our consumer website, encouraging exploration of the site and inspiring not only veal eating occasions but purchases.

By tagging the retailer in our stories, we not only reach Ontario Veal Appeal's audience directly, but our message is amplified as, more often than not, the retailer will share the story with their audience. Additionally, our social media outreach connects us with the retailer directly, building the relationship. At a recent industry event, one of the retailers that we frequently promote in our stories approached our team and expressed gratitude for the additional promotion they have been receiving via our social media channels. These were the decision-makers, the ones who determined what to feature in their flyers and their in-store promotions and they were keenly aware of the support we provided, at no additional cost to them. This discussion led into what other ways we can work together to promote Ontario veal to their customers.

Another example of the reach with the "flyer features" is the dialogue that was opened with a major retail banner after the senior meat category manager saw the stories and asked how the retailer could be featured in more of them. From this same retailer, three different store butchers reached out to chat about the features. Beyond the relationship-building component of the weekly "flyer feature" stories, it also tracks the change in featured cuts and prices over the years which is valuable data that helps us in future planning for marketing tools like recipe development.

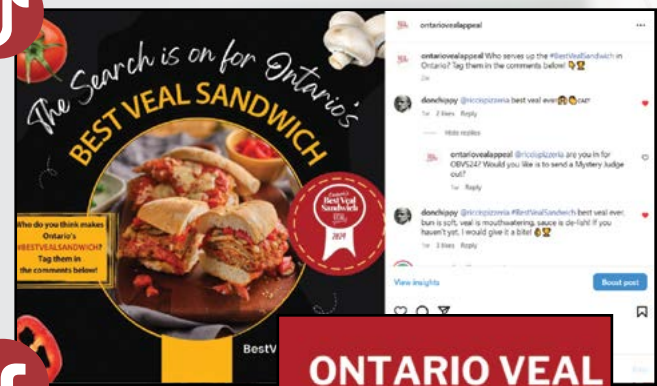


Another way we leverage the power of social media is through partnership. We are fortunate to have Chef Ted Reader, aka the Godfather of the Grill, on board to help us promote grilling with veal especially during the summer months. Chef Ted's delicious veal recipes and expert cooking tips really get people fired up about grilling veal. His timeless video content and recipes are loved by legions of fans and are featured not only on our social media channels but also shared to his social media feeds. Veal consumption traditionally slumps in the summer months so this outreach is important to keep Ontario veal top of mind, inspiring consumers to grill with veal and creating an online community of those who really like to cook with veal. Strategically, this targeted approach keeps our efforts and resources on offense rather than defense.

We further use social media to build brand ambassadors and those who will promote and champion Ontario veal from outside our organization. The 2024 search for Ontario's Best Veal Sandwich (OBVS24) provides a good example of that. This year we added a call for mystery judges to manage the more than 200 restaurants across the province that could apply to participate. More than 2,000 people initially applied and 250 were finally chosen who will be deployed across Ontario.

The campaign to promote the hiring of these judges generated huge buzz and we discovered passionate veal sandwich lovers from across the province. These vocal veal sandwich lovers were loudly and proudly flooding our feeds with positive comments and stories, giving shout outs to their favourite restaurants that served up these delicious veal cutlets, and vying for the position of judge.

And they shared our posts widely, tagging friends who they thought should apply. Since the launch of the OBVS24 mystery judge search,



compared to the previous time frame, our Instagram followers are up 14 per cent and our reach is up a whopping 6,311 per cent! Facebook is showing similar gains with six per cent increase in page likes and 160 per cent increase in organic reach.

The wave of veal love has completely drowned out any negative commentary. Our team is online daily chatting with consumers and restaurants, monitoring and steering the narrative where needed, but our newly (and sometimes self) appointed brand ambassadors are also doing that on VFO's behalf.

As part of our public trust and consumer confidence outreach, VFO also works with Farm & Food Care Ontario on their *Faces Behind Food* campaign. By profiling Ontario veal farmers and their farms, we can share your stories with consumers to help dispel myths and misconceptions about veal farming. Creating personal connections with consumers builds trust and complements our work to remain on offense. The most recent veal farmer post to the *Faces Behind Food* Facebook page has over 1,200 likes!

As we continue to navigate the evolving landscape of digital marketing, VFO remains committed to leveraging the power of social media to its fullest potential. Our strategic initiatives, exemplified by the weekly "flyer features", our collaboration with Chef Ted Reader, and the Ontario's Best Veal Sandwich Mystery Judge search, have not only amplified our brand presence but also forged stronger ties with retailers, restaurants, and consumers alike. By fostering genuine human interactions and building a community of enthusiastic veal advocates, we have proven that authentic engagement drives meaningful results. Moving forward, we will continue to innovate and refine our strategies, ensuring that every campaign not only promotes Ontario veal but also builds lasting relationships with the consumer to support sustained market share. ■

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Knowing your feed costs

John Molenhuis, Business Analysis and Cost of Production Specialist
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness

Feed costs are the largest costs of a veal operation so knowing feed costs is critical information for managing costs. They will likely comprise a combination of purchased and home-grown feeds.

Purchased feeds are typically straightforward as there are invoices for total amounts purchased in your records. Bulk purchasing can be an issue if more than one year's worth of feed is purchased in a given year. This could be for tax management or taking advantage of low-priced feed, but if the total cash purchase is kept in the year purchased this will overstate this year's feed costs and understate next year's.

Accounting for home-grown feed can be more challenging. Choosing to grow crops for home-grown feeds can be part of the farm's strategy to control feed costs. They are not looked at as a profit centre, but as a cost centre for the veal operation. Calculating home-grown feed enterprise costs is useful in determining if it is cheaper to grow feed on the farm or to purchase it from off-farm sources.

There are two ways to handle home-grown feed costs; they can be valued at the cost to produce or at market value. The cost to produce home-grown feed costs will be spread across all the crop-related costs like seed, fertilizer, pesticides, drying, storage, fuel, machinery repairs labour, custom work and crop machinery fixed costs of depreciation, interest, insurance, and housing. These costs are all kept in the veal enterprise and only crop-related costs for crops sold as cash crops or fed to other livestock will need to be separated from the veal enterprise.

Allocating out costs of cash crops or feed crops fed to other livestock is a common challenge. Some will be easier than others; milk replacer for calves, purchased complete feed rations that are specific to veal, all goes to the veal. Other feedstuffs, like grain corn or forages, may be fed to all livestock and some allocation process will be needed to separate veal's portion of those. A good set of financial and feed ration records will be needed. The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness fact sheet *Guide to cost of*

production budgeting provides some tips and suggestions on allocation: <https://ontario.ca/page/guide-cost-production-budgeting>.

Using the market value approach involves "selling" the home-grown feed crops to the veal enterprise at market value. Market value represents the opportunity or economic cost of feeding the crops to livestock rather than what you would have received selling them. It is an indication of whether you are receiving a market return for the crops fed to livestock. Accurately measuring crop production and amount fed is essential.

The first step of the market value approach is removing all crop-related costs from the veal enterprise. With all the potential costs associated with producing feed crops listed earlier, accurate allocation is important. The feed crops are then 'sold' back to veal at market value. Knowing the amount of home-grown feed fed will also be required so again record-keeping will be key. How much home-grown corn is in the ration? How many bales are fed? How much do the bales weigh? A side benefit of that is you have a good record of the ration and amounts fed, not just what it cost.

There are advantages and disadvantages of using either approach and Table 1 outlines some of these pros and cons.

The 'right' approach will depend on the question you are trying to answer. Using the cost of producing feed crops should be used to reflect the cash cost reality. This is important anytime but especially in times of tight margins. It helps answer the immediate question, 'Can the bills be paid today?'

The market value approach will be the right approach to assess whether the operation is receiving a market return for all its enterprises. It is also effective from an industry perspective to evaluate and compare returns across other sectors.

The cost to produce method reflects individual farm situations, market value is a good industry assessment whether as a sector it is achieving market returns.

Table 1. Pros and cons of feed calculation methods

Method	Pros	Cons
Market value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a margin back to feed enterprises. Shows economic cost of production if purchases were required. Overall industry assessment for comparison across sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feed cost results may be higher than the farm's cash reality. Treats home-grown crops as profit centres. There may be limited market or pricing for some crops to establish a market value. Can only manage the amount fed to control costs as feed values are set by the market.
Cost of production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflects the producer's cash reality. Shows differences between producers with low debt versus those heavily financed. Reflects timing of feed purchases. Reflects producer's experience and ability to manage costs through home-grown feed crops. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It does not account for the opportunity of selling those feeds into the market. Can inflate margins to the veal enterprise by including margins that belong to feed production enterprises. Difficult to know total feed costs as the home-grown feed costs are spread across the crop-related costs.

Measuring economic costs will give an indication of the long-term viability of the farm and of the sector. However, knowing cost of production on a cash level can tell you if your farm can survive cash flow pressures and reflects your ability to manage feed costs through home-grown feed. ■

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VFO Director re-elected VP of CVA

Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) is pleased to announce the re-election of VFO Director Judy Dirksen as Vice-President of the Canadian Veal Association (CVA), at the recent CVA Annual General Meeting.

Dirksen, who first joined the CVA Board in 2009, farms with her family near Harriston. Dirksen has served as the CVA Vice-President since 2018, and brings extensive board experience to her role, serving on the VFO Board since inception and prior to that with the legacy Ontario Veal Association, where she was Chair for 10 years. Bob Wynands, a Quebec grain-fed veal producer, was re-elected to the position of President.

Joining Dirksen on the CVA Board are Philip Kroesbergen and Kyle Roes as the Ontario representatives. The CVA is the national voice of Canada's veal farmers, collaborating with industry partners to achieve common goals for the veal sector. The CVA is administered by VFO staff. The CVA Board is comprised of delegates from the Ontario and Quebec veal sectors.

OASC discusses RMP with Minister Thompson

The Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition (OASC) leaders and staff met with Minister Thompson in late April to continue discussions about the Risk Management Program (RMP) and its importance to Ontario's livestock, grain, oilseeds, fruits and vegetables farmers. VFO Chair, Philip Kroesbergen and Executive Director, Jennifer Haley joined the hybrid meeting to ensure that Minister Thompson understands the opportunities for the Ontario veal sector and the need to have risks beyond farmer's control covered.



H5N1 (HPAI) resources

VFO is closely monitoring developments related to the strain of Influenza A (H5N1), also known as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) and is actively engaged with our dairy and beef sector colleagues, and government agencies.

Updates and resources will be posted on <https://vealfarmers.ca/influenza-a-h5n1-in-cattle/> as they are made available. In addition, any significant developments related to the veal sector will be shared via email.

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 bursitis. Learn more at <https://vealfarmers.ca/producer-information/grain-fed-veal-factsheets/>.

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VFO celebrates Local Food Week

June 3 to 9 was Local Food Week – an opportunity to celebrate the good things that are grown, harvested and made in Ontario, and the wonderful people that makes it possible! VFO engaged with consumers through our social accounts, sharing where to find our Farm-Food360° video so they can meet real Ontario veal farmers. Producers were also encouraged to get involved on social using the hashtags #loveONfood and #thanksONfarmers and sharing their favourite way to choose local.



Ontario veal farmer profiled for *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* the passion behind the food that we love, one person at a time.

VFO Director Kyle Roes was profiled for Farm & Food Care Ontario's *Faces Behind Food* public trust initiative, with the story behind how he got started raising veal cattle and is now helping shape the future of the sector. His story was shared on Instagram and Facebook during Local Food Week in June, receiving great comments and positive feedback.

VFO joins Minister's roundtable ahead of FPT meetings

Philip Kroesbergen, VFO Chair and Jennifer Haley, Executive Director participated in a roundtable with Minister Flack and industry colleagues to discuss issues impacting Ontario farmers in mid-June. Minister Flack was gathering feedback and insight ahead of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Agriculture Ministers meeting in Whitehorse in July. Topics covered in the roundtable discussions included federal issues impacting Ontario's farmers like labour, carbon tax, market access, changes to capital gains, non-tariff trade barriers, and processing capacity.



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Cattle industry emergency preparedness training

Susan Fitzgerald, Executive Director
Ontario Livestock and Poultry Council

During the first quarter of 2024, the Ontario Livestock and Poultry Council (OLPC) assisted the cattle sector organizations with preparatory emergency response training.

The Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO) and Dairy Farmers of Ontario (DFO) emergency response plans were reviewed and compared with the Feather Board Command Centre and Ontario Swine Incident Command Centre plans. A written report was prepared for BFO and DFO highlighting some gaps and providing recommendations for improvement.

There were three Incident Management System (IMS) 100 level training sessions held, one for BFO and two for DFO, with Veal Farmers of Ontario staff attending two of the training sessions. In total, 58 people attended with 52 pursuing certification. The IMS is the structure and process used by government organizations when responding to any type of emergency including animal disease, floods, wildfires, etc.

OLPC also hosted a foreign animal disease workshop on March 5, 2024, on behalf of the cattle associations. The associations extended invitations to their staff, directors and committee members, veterinarians, and government personnel. There were 52 in-person attendees and 13 online for portions of the day.

The workshop was intended to stimulate conversation among stakeholders regarding the necessary assets, vulnerabilities, and response resources including personnel, skill sets, equipment, and supplies required to respond to a foreign animal disease. The morning program consisted of several speakers and presentations on emergency preparedness and response. The afternoon session focused on a tabletop disease exercise. There was an overall recognition that all of the associations need to work together if there is a cross-species disease like Foot and Mouth Disease or any other cross-species emergency. ■



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PREPARING FOR FARM EMERGENCIES: Top 10 concerns

PART OF A SERIES OF RESOURCES ON LIVESTOCK EMERGENCIES

Bruce Kelly, Program Consultant

Farm & Food Care Ontario

Farmers, as exceptional risk managers, face and overcome challenges every day. However, the daily routine is often punctuated by the potential threats of farm emergencies, be it weather, fire, illness, or injury. It's crucial for farmers to recognize these risks and be prepared to handle them effectively, showcasing their resilience and capability.

Emergency preparedness can be as simple as listing potential risks, rating their likelihood, and considering the impact – low, medium, or high – they could have on you.

Without factoring in economic risks, 10 significant concerns to consider include:

1. **Injury or illness:** minor to major
2. **Key equipment failure:** water, feed systems, ventilation
3. **Power failure:** hours or days
4. **Wind event or tornado**
5. **Fire:** barn or field
6. **Winter storm:** snow or ice
7. **Shortage/limited access to feed or fuel supplies**
8. **Farm security:** activism, robbery, theft
9. **Livestock transport accident**
10. **Disease outbreak**

The first four concerns are common to most farmers. One or more of these may occur in the next 12 months; you may already have strategies in place for these risks within your operation, and if not, they should be priority items to prepare for.

Depending on the scale of your operation, you may have already prepared for many of the other concerns listed above as well. An important task to prioritize is discussing 'what if' and 'how to' scenarios with your family members or key employees. Their involvement and understanding can be a valuable next step in preparedness plans. Numerous templates are available if you wish to formalize planning; Environmental Farm Plan, Ontario Pork, Canadian Farm Safety Association, and others offer templates and commodity-specific resources. This article will touch on a few of the most critical considerations when assessing potential emergencies on your farm.

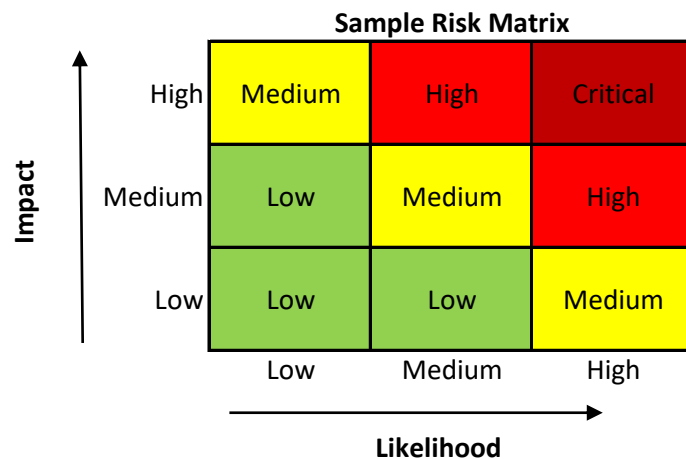


Figure 1: This risk matrix is a tool farmers can use to categorise farm emergency concerns based on their likelihood of occurrence vs. potential impact should they occur.

- 1 **Injury or illness** can strike without warning. The best defence against illness or injury is a safe workplace; train family and staff to use all equipment properly, always use the safest methods for loading and processing livestock, keep barn alleyways clear, pits covered, equipment in good repair, and safety guards in place. Apply strategies that reduce the risk of accidents or mistakes; label switches and bins, write down feed rations, and mark fill levels on feed carts or pails (this can also help those assisting you in cases of emergency). Additionally, cross-training can be practiced; this ensures that at least two people know how to do critical jobs around the farm at all times.
- 2 **Equipment breakdowns** are common in most operations; however, they can rapidly become a major concern when they affect critical systems (feed, water, ventilation, or irrigation), which are essential for animal and plant health. Preventative maintenance, periodic inspections, and using standardized equipment and parts from local suppliers are vital to reducing the impact of breakdowns. A workshop well-stocked with regular maintenance parts, spare feed, replacement motors, and controllers can reduce repair times and risks from potential breakdowns.

3 **Power failures** quickly remind us how much modern operations rely on continual electrical power. Reliance on electricity means that having a backup option is not just a convenience but a necessity. Concerns resulting from power failures can range from a lack of temperature controls to computer system failures and data corruption. The hydro grid in Ontario is very dependable, but it can never guarantee power when seasonal storms sweep in. There are three basic options for backup power – portable, PTO, and auto-start standby generators. Options vary depending on farm size, as well as water, heat, and ventilation needs. Regardless of which option you choose, ensure that you have a safe way of using alternative power sources with proper transfer switches and a safe location for any fuel-burning engines.

4 **Wind storms** are the most considerable risk to farm buildings on a provincial scale and cause the most significant insurance dollar losses. Wind storms can occur as winter gales, local summer thunderstorms, tornados, or the more widespread *Derecho* wind storm, which has swept across the province in recent years, causing millions of dollars in damages. The *Derecho* wind event in May 2022 cost Ontario Mutuals approximately \$70 MM. The best defence against wind storms is to have reliable backup power, keep buildings in good repair, secure doors, and, of course, maintain up-to-date insurance.

5 **Farm fires** often cannot be traced back to an exact cause due to catastrophic damage. It is suggested that 40 to 70 per cent of barn fires are due to faults within the electrical systems. It is estimated that only eight per cent of the electrical faults are in the wiring while an estimated 85 per cent of the faults are electromechanical at junction boxes and receptacles. Electrical monitoring systems are quickly becoming a best practice in the agricultural sector, allowing farmers to manage their operations efficiently while significantly reducing the chances of a critical electrical fault leading to fire. Contact your insurance provider for more information on these monitoring/alarm systems.

If the unthinkable happens and your farm experiences an emergency, in addition to your veterinarian and insurance provider, contact the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness and your commodity organization as soon as possible. These groups have the resources to help you through the harrowing aftermath of a farm emergency. Risks exist on all farms, and time spent planning how to prevent and prepare for them is an essential part of our role as farm managers, regardless of the size of our operation.

For other articles on *farm power*, *farm security systems* and *farm fire prevention*, check out the Farm & Food Care Knowledge Hub: <https://www.farmfoodcareon.org/farm-animal-care/knowledgehub/>



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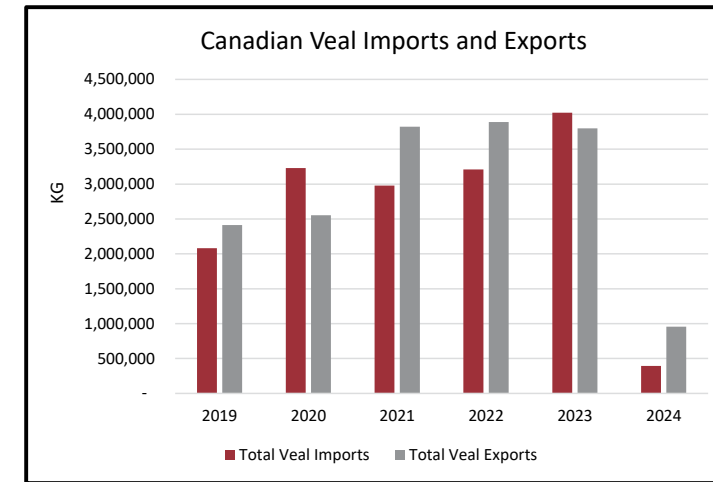
Veal Trade Tracker

30-Apr-24

A snapshot of Canada's veal trade

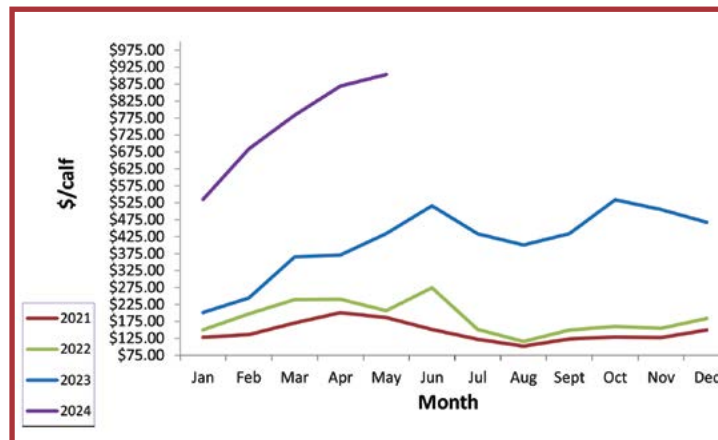
VEAL MARKET INFORMATION

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



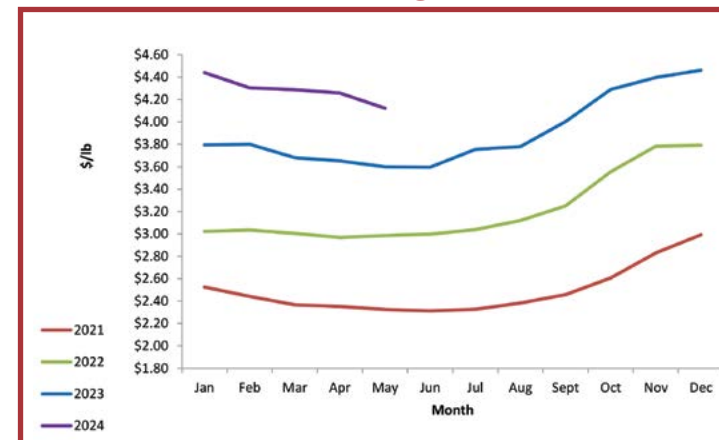
2024 has seen a shift with the exports exceeding imports for the first part of the year. The majority of the Exports are to the United States.

Bob Calf Pricing



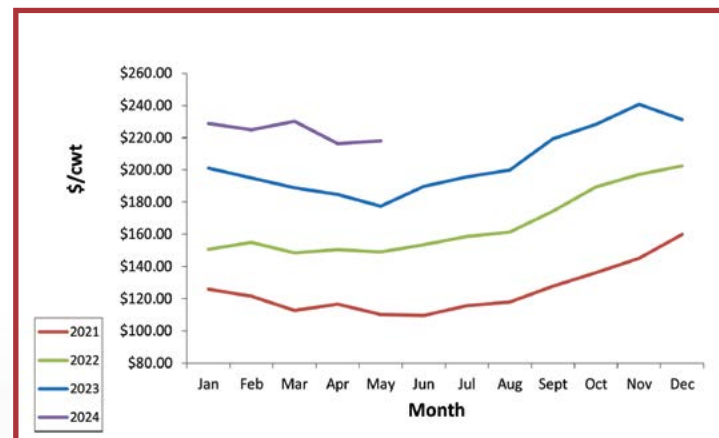
This price range is collected and tabulated from participating sale barns throughout Ontario based on average pricing. This information is used to follow trends.

Rail Grade Veal Pricing

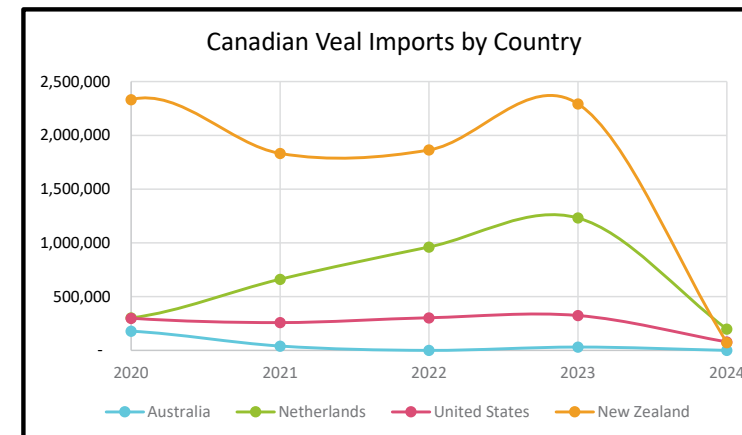


This information is collected from producer contributions on a weekly basis. Once the numbers are collected a weighted average is calculated. The weighted average gives a more realistic price of what is happening in the market. This information is used to follow trends.

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.



The 2024 numbers represent the time period from January till April. Imports from the Netherlands are down significantly compared to the same time period in 2023. Overall, imports are down by 54 percent compared to the same time period in 2024.



Veal exports have declined for the same time period as 2023 with the biggest decline to the United States. The United Arab Emirates held steady during January to April 2024.

Ontario VEAL appeal

Barbecue Grilled Veal Stuffed Cheesy Bread

Cut: Ground/Minced | Servings: 6

Even beginners can grill up this easy, cheesy and tasty veal stuffed bread. Chilling for at least an hour before cooking will help the stuffing stick to the bread and keep it from falling through the grill.

Ingredients:

- 3 crusty French rolls, about 6 to 7 inches long
- 1-½ lbs ground Ontario veal
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped, about 1 cup
- 1 pkg onion soup mix
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- 2 tbsp potato starch
- 2 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- ¾ cup tomato sauce (store bought something with a bit of a zip to it is nice)
- 6 pieces mozzarella, Havarti or gouda cheese, cut into 8, 4-inch-long x 1-inch rectangles
- 6 tsp canola oil.
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Instructions:

Cut each bread roll in half lengthways and scoop out a cavity in the center of each bread half, making a little trough. Set aside.

Take the bread dough that you removed from the bun and chop it finely. Set aside.

In a large bowl mix together the ground veal, onion, onion soup mix, garlic, parsley, potato starch, black pepper and left over breadcrumbs. Mix well to fully incorporate. Divide mixture into 6 equal parts.

Brush the cut side of each bun half with tomato sauce, about 1-2 tbsp per bread half. Take a piece of cheese and place it into the sauced cavity pressing it firmly into place.

Spread one portion of the ground veal mixture evenly over the surface of the cheese/sauced stuffed bread, pressing firmly so that the meat adheres to the bread. Make sure to spread the meat all the way to the edge of the bread, and that you have a uniform thickness, this will help for even cooking. Repeat with remaining ground meat and stuffed bread.



Brush meat side with a little canola oil, place evenly onto a plate or platter. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour, this will help the meat stick to the bread.

Fire up your grill to medium high heat, 450-550 degrees F.

Place the cheesy meat bread loaves meat side down onto the grill and grill for 8-10 minutes, carefully turn over, reduce heat to medium low, 325-350 degrees F, close grill lid and continue to cook for 4 to 5 minutes until the veal mixture is fully cooked (160 degrees F) and the cheese is just starting to ooze.

Remove from grill, season to taste with a little salt and freshly ground black pepper and serve with extra warmed tomato sauce for dipping.

Serve immediately. ■

Source: Ted Reader BBQ (TedReaderBBQ.com).



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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 fee/check-off on behalf of the farmers they are collecting from. If you are selling bob calves from your dairy farm, the licence fee/check-off is to be collected and remitted by the person purchasing those calves. If you sell your calves to a sales barn, the licence fee/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 Agricorp website at <https://bit.ly/Agricorpdealers> or contact the VFO office.

PLEASE NOTE: Until June 30, 2024, \$5.50/head is to be remitted to VFO. Effective July 1, 2024, \$7.50/head is to be remitted to VFO.

2024 VFO licence fee remittances

Ontario Regulation 58/15 Veal Cattle Marketing 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.

If veal cattle are purchased from a sale barn this does not apply.

Licence fee remittances are due on the 15th of the following month.

Forms 4 and 5 are available on <https://vealfarmers.ca> or contact the VFO office to have copies mailed.

Ontario Beef Cattle Financial Protection Program

Agricorp 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 Agricorp. Visit <https://bit.ly/agricorp> or call 1-888-247-4999 for more information. ■

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