

# THE Connection

Fall 2024 Volume 6, No. 3

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## IN THIS ISSUE

**Meet VFO's newest director**

**HCC marks 20 years of better  
calf management**

**Understanding *Mycoplasma bovis***



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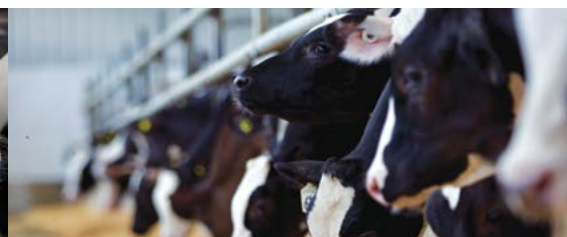
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## Contents

- 4** Chair's Message
- 6** Producer Profile: Cory Streicher
- 8** Straw: More than just a bedding source
- 10** Industry collaboration improves calf health
- 12** Maximize calf health with these expert tips
- 14** From symptoms to solutions: Understanding *Mycoplasma bovis* in dairy calves
- 16** Join the movement: Veal producers are important contributors to effective traceability
- 18** Making machinery decisions
- 20** Industry updates
- 22** Farm & Food Care Ontario's Mid-year update
- 24** Veal Market Information
- 25** Veal Trade Tracker
- 26** Featured veal recipe





## Chair's MESSAGE



Philip Kroesbergen

# A producer perspective on calf pricing

Traditionally in the summer, the market for Holstein bulls softens, but this year is completely different. Pricing for one- to three-week-olds has maintained a \$700 to \$1000 (on average) range after the dizzying pricing of the spring. Is there a massive shortage of calves? There are definitely not enough to go around. Naturally, there are plenty of cross calves in the market that have reduced pure Holstein numbers, but producers have adjusted to this development over the past few years. It's clear that the market is hot for these animals. Is this a bad thing and is the upfront cost worth the risk? Are we due for a correction that will result in major losses for our producers? This is a topic and some questions I want to share my thoughts on.

Protein markets have changed over the past number of years, but the demand for veal has remained steady and the market has supported the higher cost of production (COP). Veal imports have fallen in 2024, shown by the Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) Trade Tracker, with the Netherlands shipping less than half of the volume they were in 2023. Veal exports have continued but fallen slightly, indicating fewer animals.

It is also important to note that broader economic conditions have not changed considerably during this time period. Historically, in times of economic downturn veal sales are not reduced significantly. Last fall, we saw a weak Canadian dollar, with added buying pressure from the United States (US) for fat cattle. Today we have a dollar that is essentially the same – barely holding 0.72 cents, enticing the US to continue importing fat cattle. The Canadian beef market will continue to buy and feed cross calves as a result of this added demand.

All these things come together to create a market condition where people are willing to pay a large amount upfront for animals knowing there is a market to sell when they are fat. I have been using a term lately that goes "Pay to play". While COP has leveled off and even decreased with lower grain pricing, the amount of money invested has never been higher than this past spring/summer.

Is it a bad thing that calf prices are so high? Producers often question if they should participate when calves are so expensive, and smaller producers may be disproportionately concerned that there will be enough profit from the group to cover any losses during the growing period. On the flip

side, dairy farmers' breeding programs are also affected by high pricing. If beef cross calves have a significant premium, it stands to reason that more cows could be bred to beef in the future and that Holstein calf prices will have to follow along with cross calf prices to maintain numbers for veal production. Everyone would like cheap calves, but veal farmers are competing for them and paying the dairy farmer the right price is essential. Veal producers excel at feeding veal cattle, and the price of the calves we purchase is an investment in our partnership with dairy farmers – we rely on them to provide us with a consistent supply of healthy, quality calves. VFO also recognizes the importance of this relationship and continues to support it with events like the Healthy Calf Conference, to help us all navigate calf health challenges during this risky time for both the calf and our bottom line.

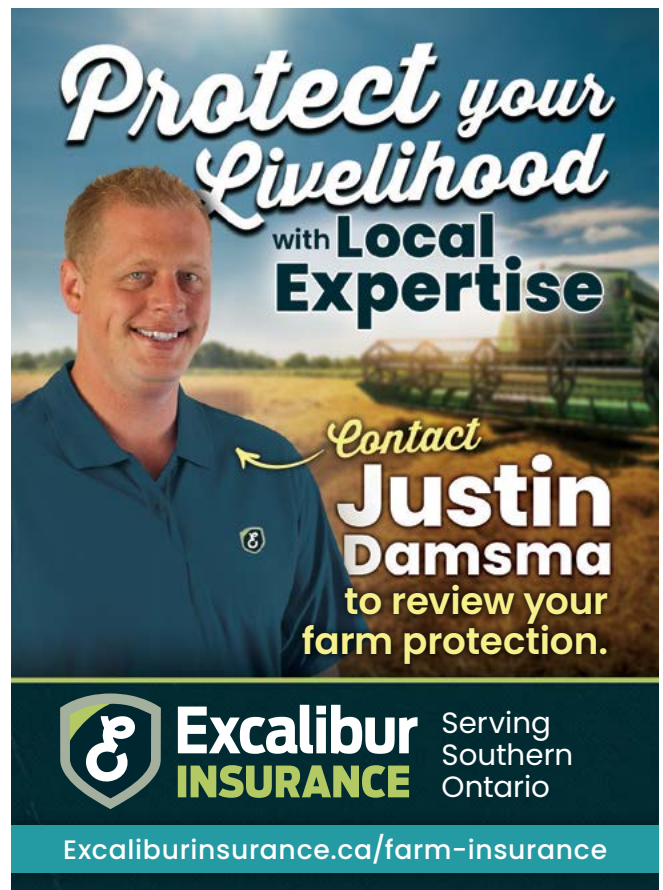
The risk veal farmers are taking this year has never been higher. Upfront costs just to buy and start the calf are more than what finished veal cattle sold for a few years ago. Is the risk manageable and will the finished veal price support these massive costs? The only program veal producers have to help mitigate risk is the Ontario Risk Management Program (RMP). If enrolled, producers may receive a payment if a loss is incurred. I encourage any producers who have not enrolled in this program to consider using it to help hedge risk. As VFO Chair, I represent veal producers on the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition (OASC), as we work with our commodity group partners to lobby government for additional funds for this program to help cover producers if there are losses.

With how the market has generally covered costs in the past couple years, the shortage of animals on the market, and the steady demand, the likelihood that the market pays well for these animals is high. Changing geopolitical and economic conditions may have an effect but that is yet to be seen. Prices for calves may soften yet as we ease into the fall which will provide some relief but the days of \$100 calves are most likely over. It is important for producers to have a good marketing strategy as well. The risk is not worth taking if you don't have options with your buyers or negotiating power to get market value.

Consumers need a break when buying food and goods and meat is one of the items that has risen far above what people can afford. A correction is


due and hopefully it doesn't mean that producers lose. I think the time frame for this correction will be in the next year or so. If cattle numbers recover and calf pricing is reduced, finished pricing should fall. I'm certain market pricing will find a better equilibrium to benefit both producers and consumers in this circumstance.

Plenty of discussion around these topics has been floating around and it's important to assess the markets' current condition. Each farm makes different decisions to make the business work, and I applaud veal producers for making it work in these times. ■



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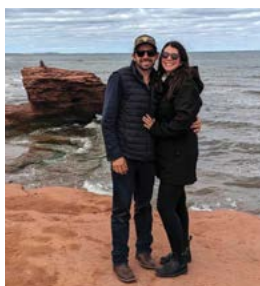


## PRODUCER PROFILE:

CORY STREICHER



Tell us a bit about yourself and your operation.



I was born and raised on a dairy farm outside of Milverton, Ontario. With help from my wife Desiree, I market up to 400 veal cattle each year at our local sales barn. I also still help out on our family's dairy farm and work off-farm daily.

Initially, we began feeding pigs in the bank barn on our farm, and then renovated to start finishing veal cattle in 2020. Around 200 calves are started in hutches and a coverall building.

### How do you source calves?

When buying at the sales barn, we look for healthy, started calves that are bright-eyed and have dry navels. When they arrive at our farm, we start our vaccination program against respiratory diseases and offer electrolytes to make the transition easier.

### Can you describe your feeding program?

Calves are offered milk replacer by bottle until they're eight weeks old and are weaned onto a 3:1 corn mix and starter. We finish on a 4:1 ration and target weights above 700 lbs., shipping veal cattle to market when they show properly finished qualities.

### Have you introduced any technology on the farm?

A few investments on our farm have helped reduce labour and improve efficiency for all age groups of veal cattle. We run an automatic feeding system for the finishing ration that feeds two to three times per day.

We also manufactured a mixing and feeding system for the bottle-fed calves that helps cut down on feeding time. The bottles are washed with an automatic bottle washer.





### What are your plans for the future?

Optimizing calf health and growth is a priority for our farm, and in the next five years we're planning to build a new facility.

### What are you looking forward to as VFO's newest director?

This past spring I was appointed to the Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) Board of Directors. I've been learning a lot about the many different facets of the industry and look forward to interacting with other producers to discuss new and better ways to produce top quality veal. Helping our sector address the myths and misconceptions of raising veal cattle is another area I would like to focus on as a Director. ■

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# Straw: More than just a bedding source

Heather Offinga, Beef Cattle Livestock Assistant

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness

Ruminal acidosis is a challenge that producers face with ruminant species. In the cattle feeding industry, acidosis incidents cause lower growth rate, lower average daily gain, and increased risk of damage to the rumen that will continue to impact the animal's growth. These impacts also result in financial loss for the producer. Luckily, there are ways to reduce the risk of ruminal acidosis. One simple method involves adding straw into veal cattle rations from a young age.

## Benefits of adding straw to veal rations

Including straw in veal cattle rations from the milk-fed stage up until they reach market weight has many benefits. Straw is an excellent source of physically effective fibre that can improve rumen motility, stimulate chewing and salivation, maintain a healthy rumen microbial population, increase rumen pH, and decrease digestive upsets and off-feed incidences. Adding roughages, such as straw, to a young calf's diet positively impacts rumen development, resulting in improved feed utilization. Feeding forages to calves has also been shown to increase starter feed intake and total dry matter intake, with no compromise in feed to gain ratios. Adding straw to veal cattle rations can help decrease abnormal mouthing behaviours (such as tongue playing), reduce ruminal hair ball prevalence, and lower the risk of ruminal acidosis. In finishing cattle, roughages help to buffer the pH of the rumen during this stage of heavy grain feeding. These benefits impact both the welfare of the cattle, as well as improve their feed efficiency and rumen function, improving production outcomes.

Ruminal acidosis is a condition where rumen pH falls below the 5.5 to 5.7 range for an extended period of time, leading to decreased animal performance. This is due to decreased nutrient absorption and fibre digestion as a result of impaired rumen function. The addition of straw into veal cattle rations can help reduce risk of digestive upsets, including acidosis. Straw is effective at increasing chewing and rumination in cattle. High ruminal acid concentrations lower the rumen pH, and feeding roughages such as straw helps decrease the concentrations to keep the rumen pH above the risk range for ruminal acidosis.

## Straw chop length

Not all straw is created equal! Particle size matters when it comes to impacting rumen health. Both chop length and straw quality will impact the amount of physically effective fibre (peNDF) that the straw contains. PeNDF represents the fraction of the feedstuff that helps stimulate chewing and decreases the risk of ruminal acidosis. PeNDF is a function of both the physical effectiveness factor (pef) and neutral detergent fibre



**Figure 5.** Chopped straw mixed into a whole corn and pellet-based veal cattle ration.

$$\text{peNDF (\%)} = \text{pef} \times \text{NDF (\%)} \\ \text{\% of roughage on upper 3 sieves of PSPS}$$

**Figure 1.**

Equation used to determine the level of effective fibre (peNDF) of roughages, which takes into account both the NDF and the pef, derived from the proportion of roughage on the three upper pans of the PSPS.

(NDF) of the roughage source. NDF can be obtained from a lab report whereas pef is determined by assessing particle size with a Penn State Particle Separator (PSPS) see Figure 1. Pef represents the fraction of the straw source over four millimetres in chop length, which is the proportion retained on the top three sieves of the PSPS (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.**

The four different levels of a Penn State Particle Separator. Clockwise from the top left, the holes become smaller on each pan. When the user stacks the pans (with the largest holes on top) and shakes the PSPS, the straw particles will fall to the appropriate sieve for their size range. The straw on each sieve and bottom pan can be quantified and expressed as a percentage of the overall sample.

A study was conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) in 2021 to further investigate rates of peNDF inclusion in finishing veal cattle diets. Roughage sources tend to have the greatest contribution to effective fibre. However, the 2021 survey determined that the majority of veal producers at the time didn't add roughages to their rations. Of those that did, a PSPS was used to assess particle size of the straw included in the rations and the results are summarized in Figure 3. In the absence of "hard and fast" recommendations for chop length of straw in veal cattle rations, peNDF can be a useful reference point when considering whether chop length needs to be modified and by how much. Additionally, it is useful to monitor manure consistency, feed sorting at the bunk, and other cattle behaviours to determine whether straw chop length should be adjusted. Straw that is too long in length and in too great of proportion in the ration can result in feed sorting and potentially reduced performance, whereas straw that is too fine will have reduced capacity to provide the "scratch factor" needed to reduce risk of acidosis.



	Straw Sample 1	Straw Sample 2	Straw Sample 3
pef	97	90	61
NDF*	73.65	73.65	73.65
peNDF	71.1	66.4	44.6

**Figure 3.**

This image from a 2021 finishing veal ration benchmarking study shows how chop length (i.e., pef) impacts the peNDF value of different samples of straw and ultimately the ability of the roughage to stimulate chewing activity and improve rumen pH. \*Note the NDF values of the straw samples were not available, so NRC "book" values were used as the NDF value for these samples.

Screen	Pore Size (mm)	Particle Size (mm)
Upper Sieve	19	>19
Middle Sieve	8	8 to 19
Lower Sieve	4	4 to 8
Bottom Pan		<4

**Figure 4.**

Specifications of the Penn State Particle Separator

## Practical considerations for adding straw to rations

There are a few options to consider when adding straw to your veal cattle rations. Straw inclusion should be approximately two per cent of a total mixed ration. Chopping and mixing straw into the ration can be done to manage the proportion of straw that each animal receives. Mixing the straw into the ration allows you to have more control and accuracy over intake by reducing feed sorting (Figure 5). This can lead to optimum feed digestion and decrease risk of acidosis or other digestive upsets. However, this method is also more time consuming and requires the proper machinery. Alternatively, straw can be chopped and top dressed (Figure 6), but intakes should be closely monitored. Ensure that all animals are able to gain access to the straw and consult with your nutritionist when making changes to your feeding program.



**Figure 6.**

Chopped straw mixed into a whole corn and pellet-based veal cattle ration.

## Conclusions

Adding straw to veal rations has many positive impacts on growth performance, feed efficiency, welfare and overall rumen health. Feeding straw to young calves can positively impact rumen development, leading to increased feed efficiency down the line. Straw benefits cattle in all stages of production by reducing the risk for ruminal acidosis, thereby increasing their performance. ■

*This article was written with input from Megan Van Schaik, OMAFA Beef Cattle Specialist (Student Supervisor).*

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# Industry collaboration improves calf health

## Healthy Calf Conference marks 20 years of better calf management

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Two decades ago, the North American calf industry realized it had a problem. Various research studies were showing that calf health wasn't going in the right direction and producers were increasingly frustrated with their experiences in the barn. It was time to make a change and improve the health of calves entering the veal sector.

Ontario decided to start bringing together experts and launched the Healthy Calf Conference, which is marking its 20th anniversary this year. Led by Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO), the [calfcare.ca](http://calfcare.ca) website and popular Calf Care Corner e-newsletter were developed, and the reach extended even further with the addition of social media channels to help connect the industry and share information.

"Today, the improvements in calf health have been considerable, thanks to the industry coming together to focus on making positive change," says Kendra Keels, Industry Development Director at VFO. "For two decades, we've brought together dairy, veal and dairy-beef calf raisers to a single event dedicated to boosting calf health – which in turn means healthier animals, lower production costs and higher market prices."

Calves entering the veal sector were stressed by inadequate colostrum management, commingling and transportation, which led to high mortality and poor health. Over the years, however, producers have noted the change in calf quality, Keels adds. Awareness around better colostrum management has resulted in dramatic improvement of serum total protein levels as well as a significant drop in mortality.

"We appreciate the many producers, industry partners, researchers, government representatives and others who've joined us on the journey to healthier calves over the last 20 years whether it's been by attending, presenting or sponsoring the event or otherwise supporting education efforts," she notes. "The entire industry is to be congratulated on its ongoing commitment to encouraging positive change and taking action to raise the bar on healthy calf management."

### Information you can use, right now

Attendance at the conference has grown steadily over the years and it's become the leading education event for those raising calves. Much of

that success can be attributed to its focus on delivering practical information grounded in science that will make a difference in the barn and can be implemented right away.

This year's event, scheduled for November 20 as both an in-person and online event, will be no different. Every participant will have access to dynamic speakers, an online portal of presentation recordings and calf care resources, an exclusive bonus talk available only online and a free calf manual for those attending in-person.

As well, in-person participants will enjoy a trade show and hot lunch, receive a free calf pail, sponsored in part by Farmers Depot, and have the chance to win a refractometer.

### Program highlights include European expert on reducing antimicrobial use

Dr. Bart Pardon from Ghent University in Belgium will be the keynote speaker, sharing highlights from his research into pre-conditioning and early disease detection to reduce antimicrobial use.

Dr. Cynthia Miltenburg from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness will provide an overview of current disease pressures facing the industry, and University of Guelph professor Dr. Charlotte Winder will be addressing pain management for calves. As well, Dr. Mike Nagroske from Saskatoon Colostrum Company Ltd., will provide a bonus presentation that will be available exclusively online for conference participants.

New this year is a session featuring student researchers from the University of Guelph. Three graduate students will present highlights from their research work, including colostrum feeding, calf nutrition and physiology during transport, and when and how to treat calves with diarrhea.

### How to join us at Ontario's premier calf care event

This year's Healthy Calf Conference will be held Wednesday, November 20 at the Arden Park Hotel in Stratford, as well as online via Zoom, from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Registration fees are \$100 per person for producers



and \$130 per person for industry partners for in-person participation and \$75 for online attendance. Visit <https://hcc2024.eventbrite.ca> to register; deadline for signing up for in-person is November 6 and online is November 18.

Special thank you to Healthy Calf Conference title sponsors Grober Nutrition and Mapleview Agri and to Diamond V, Agri-Plastics, DairyPlus by Farmtario, Endovac, Saskatoon Colostrum Company, Serval, Farmers Depot, Arbourdale, Solvet, DairyTrace and Grand Valley Fortifiers for providing additional sponsorship. Appreciation also goes to event supporters Beef Farmers of Ontario and Dairy Farmers of Ontario. ■

“We look forward to welcoming you to the 20th anniversary edition of the Healthy Calf Conference, which we believe will be the best one yet,” says Keels.

For more information, visit [calfcare.ca](http://calfcare.ca) or send a email to [events@vealfarmers.ca](mailto:events@vealfarmers.ca).



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# Maximize calf health with these expert tips



Ask

**Kendra**

Kendra Keels

Industry Development Director

Raising calves requires attention to detail and a commitment to best practices in animal welfare and production. Here are expert management tips to help calf raisers ensure the health and growth of their animals – both veal and dairy producers have a role to play.

## 1. Optimize nutrition

Proper nutrition is necessary for the growth and development of calves. Start by ensuring calves receive adequate colostrum within the first few hours of life, this is essential for building their immune systems. Transition them to a milk replacer that meets their nutritional needs, providing it in sufficient quantities to promote healthy weight gain. To learn more about feeding quantities visit <https://calfcare.ca>.

As calves grow, gradually introduce a high-quality starter feed to stimulate rumen development. Ensure that clean, fresh water is always available. Regularly monitor feed intake and adjust rations based on the calves' growth rates and health status.

## 2. Maintain high standards of animal welfare

Animal welfare is a top priority for calf producers. Provide housing that offers adequate space, ventilation, and bedding to keep calves comfortable and healthy. Group housing systems are recommended, as they allow for social interaction and movement, which are important for the well-being of the calves. To learn more about housing requirements, visit <https://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/veal-cattle>.

Providing calves with environmental enrichment helps to improve their welfare and development. This can include some cost-effective ideas like hanging stationary brushes, ropes, or balls.

## 3. Monitor health and manage disease

Early detection and treatment of illnesses are vital for maintaining a healthy herd. Implement a routine health monitoring program that includes regular veterinary oversight. Be vigilant for signs of common calf diseases, such as scours, respiratory infections, and bloat.


Develop treatment protocols in consultation with the herd veterinarian and ensure that all farm staff are trained to recognize symptoms and administer treatments according to the protocols.

Keeping detailed health records for each calf can help track disease patterns and evaluate the effectiveness of treatment strategies. It is also a valuable tool to monitor meat withdrawal periods before shipping off the farm.



## 4. Implement effective housing and ventilation

Calf housing should be designed to protect animals from extreme weather conditions while ensuring good ventilation to minimize respiratory problems. Proper airflow helps reduce the build-up of ammonia and other harmful gases, which can impact calf health.

Consider adjustable ventilation systems that allow you to control airflow based on weather conditions. Additionally, ensure that housing areas are kept dry and clean, with regular removal of soiled bedding and waste.



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## 5. Weaning

Detailed guidelines on how to effectively wean calves from milk or milk replacer to solid feed can be beneficial. Gradual weaning can reduce stress and support smoother transitions. It is recommended that all team members follow the same weaning protocol to ensure calf success.

## 6. Biosecurity and hygiene

Implement biosecurity measures to prevent the spread of disease. This includes maintaining clean facilities, using footbaths and hand sanitizers for farm personnel and visitors, and isolating sick animals to prevent outbreaks. Regular health checks and vaccinations are also critical components of a comprehensive animal welfare program.

Biosecurity is critical in preventing the introduction and spread of diseases. Establish strict protocols for farm entry, including limiting access to essential personnel only. Clean and disinfect equipment and facilities regularly and ensure that new animals are quarantined before being introduced to the main herd.

Encourage good hygiene practices among farm staff, such as washing hands before and after handling calves and wearing clean clothing and footwear. Effective biosecurity measures not only protect the health of the calves but also contribute to overall farm productivity.

## 7. Staff training

Ensuring that all farm staff are well-trained in calf care, health monitoring, and emergency procedures is vital. Continuous education and training programs can enhance overall farm management.

## Conclusion

By implementing these management tips – optimizing nutrition, maintaining high animal welfare standards, monitoring health, ensuring effective housing and ventilation, weaning, focusing on biosecurity and hygiene and staff training – calf raisers can enhance the health and efficiency of their herds. Adopting these best practices not only improves calf welfare but also supports the sustainability and profitability of calf farming operations. ■

  
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# From symptoms to solutions: Understanding *Mycoplasma bovis* in dairy calves

*Mycoplasma bovis* (*M. bovis*), is a significant concern for calf raisers. This article will explain what it is, how it affects calves, and how to manage and prevent it on-farm.

## What is *M. bovis*?

*M. bovis* refers to a group of bacteria that can infect cattle. Unlike other bacteria, *M. bovis* lacks a cell wall, making it resistant to many common antibiotics. This unique feature makes it harder to treat infections caused by *M. bovis*.

## How does it affect calves?

*M. bovis* can cause various health problems in dairy calves, including:

- 1. Respiratory issues:** The most common symptom is pneumonia. Infected calves may have difficulty breathing, cough, and nasal discharge.
- 2. Joint infections:** Calves may develop swollen joints, leading to lameness and difficulty moving.
- 3. Ear infections:** Infected calves might have droopy ears, head tilts, and ear discharge.

*M. bovis* is particularly important as it causes chronic respiratory disease and arthritis in dairy calves. It is a key player in bovine respiratory disease complex (BRD), and chronic pneumonia and polyarthritis syndrome (CPPS). CPPS is responsible for 25 to 40 per cent of beef feedlot calf mortality and has surpassed shipping fever as the leading cause of death loss in high-risk fall-placed feedlot calves in Canada.

## How does It spread?

*M. bovis* spreads through direct contact with infected animals or contaminated equipment. It can also spread through airborne droplets when infected animals cough or sneeze. Calves are particularly vulnerable during stressful periods, such as weaning or transportation, when their immune systems are weakened.

## Recognizing the symptoms

Early detection is crucial. Monitor for coughing and nasal discharge, laboured breathing, swollen joints or lameness, head tilts and ear discharge, and poor growth and/or weight gain.

If any of these symptoms are noticed, it is important to act quickly to prevent the spread of infection.

## Diagnosing *Mycoplasma*

A veterinarian can diagnose *M. bovis* using laboratory tests, usually by taking a nasal swab from an affected calf. Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests are now available, which can detect *M. bovis* within hours. A PCR test identifies genetic material from the pathogen, making it a fast and accurate diagnostic tool. This quick and precise diagnosis is key for effective treatment.

## Treatment and prevention

Treating *M. bovis* can be challenging due to its resistance to many antibiotics. Some antibiotics can still be effective, and supportive care such as anti-inflammatory medications and good nutrition can help improve recovery. Consult with the herd veterinarian for the best course of treatment based on the specific type and severity of the infection.

Prevention is crucial. Implement strong biosecurity measures, maintain high standards of hygiene, and minimize stress during critical periods. Recently, a new vaccine specifically targeting *M. bovis* in calves has become available. It is the first and only modified live bacterial vaccine against respiratory disease caused by *M. bovis*. It is worth discussing this option with the herd veterinarian to learn more.

## Monitoring and management

Regular monitoring is key to early detection and effective management of *M. bovis* infections. Keep detailed records of symptoms, treatments, and outcomes. Work closely with the herd veterinarian to develop a herd health plan tailored to the farm's specific needs.

## Conclusion

*M. bovis* is a challenging but manageable threat to dairy calf health. Understanding the symptoms, working with the herd veterinarian, and implementing strong biosecurity and management practices can protect calves and maintain a healthy, productive herd. Early detection and prevention are the best tools in the fight against *M. bovis*. ■



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# Join the movement: Veal producers are important contributors to effective traceability

Mackayla de Kwant, DairyTrace Program Manager

Lactanet

In Canada, livestock traceability includes all stakeholders from farm of origin to terminal site. All have different recording and reporting responsibilities depending on their place in the production chain. DairyTrace aims to make traceability convenient and easy, not only for dairy producers, but also for those who handle animals born on a dairy farm after they leave – which means you! **Protecting all participants of the dairy cattle traceability and value chain is more important than ever before.**



## Why DairyTrace and why now?

Being a part of the dairy industry traceability system and working alongside Canada's dairy farmers maintains a strong partnership between these production systems. Since September 2021, Canadian dairy farmers have been required, through proAction®, to report to DairyTrace all tag activations for new births on the farm, retagging events for lost tags, move-ins, imports, exports, and tag retirements from on-farm disposals.

Currently, other members of the dairy traceability chain, including veal producers, are required to comply to the federal *Health of Animals Regulations* pertaining to traceability. Specifically, you must report any tag replacements and/or cross references for retagged animals, as well as tag retirements from on-farm disposals, imports and exports. For animals identified with white tags, these events should be reported to DairyTrace to maintain an accurate traceability chain.

Also important for good traceability is the reporting of movement events that take place during an animal's life. Unless you voluntarily report these move-in and move-out events to DairyTrace, the system will be missing a series of events between an animal's birth and end of life. By 2025 or 2026, proposed amendments to the current federal Regulations are expected to be in place, which will require the reporting of move-in events.



*With a DairyTrace account, if an animal loses their white RFID tag, you can order tags online, and then report the regulated cross reference event.*





As a veal producer, what does this all mean?  
How does DairyTrace benefit me?

1. Report move-in: Having a DairyTrace account for your farm will allow you to report voluntary move-in events. **With move-in events, you would have access to a valid birth certificate for the animal you purchased.** This information could be accessed later, for either export status or harvest where age verification may be required.
2. Premises ID: For efficient traceability, dairy farmers can report a move-out to your premise. This is made easiest for farmers if they know your Premises ID. **Create a DairyTrace account, add your Premises ID and allow your premise to be shared to other DairyTrace users to report these events.**
3. Animal inventory: **When you consistently report move-in and move-out events for your herd to DairyTrace, you will have access to an accurate animal inventory list.**

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## Why traceability?

### Protection

The cattle industry has seen the impact of livestock disease, here in Canada and elsewhere. We are now seeing the impact of diseases never expected to affect dairy cattle, highlighting the necessity of a traceability system like DairyTrace to protect the industry. In the event of a disease outbreak, having complete traceability data on all animals born on a dairy farm, including after they leave, helps enable a quick and effective response, mitigating the impact to the whole industry.

### Prosperity – Market access and economics

Traceability offers a competitive advantage to our local and global marketplace. Knowing where animals have come from, when and where they are bought and sold, and where they die secures business continuity and supply chain credibility. Traceability and emergency management are essential to the economic health of the Canadian **dairy and veal** industries. The data collected by DairyTrace can prepare us for challenging times, help protect our economy and **strengthen our industry reputations, at home and around the world.**

### Peace of mind

The estimated negative economic effect of an animal disease outbreak is staggering. Many industries are impacted including terminal sites, the processing sector, distribution networks, tourism, and the restaurant industry. Costs include lost sales, lost profits, lost consumer demand and market access, as well as costs related to disease control. Additionally, not only are there economic effects, but also added mental health load on farmers of an affected herd.

### Setting up a DairyTrace account

You can contact DairyTrace Customer services by email at [info@dairytrace.ca](mailto:info@dairytrace.ca) or by phone at 1-866-558-7223 and request to set up a veal producer account.

We have a friendly, knowledgeable Customer Services team available to help you get started with DairyTrace, guide you towards traceability reporting options and answer your questions. The DairyTrace portal is an easy-to-use platform that makes it simple to report and access resources. Information is also available on our website at <https://DairyTrace.ca>. ■



# Making machinery decisions

John Molenhuis, Business Analysis and Cost of Production Specialist

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness

Machinery is expensive. Making decisions on how to manage machinery needs is important. For instance, is it better to own the equipment or is it better to hire a custom farmwork operator to complete the work.

**Table 1. Machinery ownership versus hiring custom farmwork**

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
Own equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Equipment and operator are ready and available when needed, especially for weather-sensitive operations such as planting, spraying, and harvesting. Timeliness of operation impacts directly on yield, product quality and farm revenue.</li><li>• Farm manager has direct control of operating decisions.</li><li>• Farm manager develops and maintains hands-on knowledge of operation.</li><li>• Risk of weed transfer or biosecurity concerns is reduced.</li><li>• Potential additional revenue source in performing custom farmwork or renting equipment.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Capital investment needed.</li><li>• Farm business may not be large enough to cover the equipment's ownership and operating costs.</li><li>• Equipment replacement rate may not keep pace with new technology.</li><li>• The farm may not be able to supply the labour at the time the operation is required.</li><li>• Farmer is required to master an additional management skill set.</li><li>• Farmer is responsible for repairs beyond warranty when owned.</li></ul>
Hire custom farmwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Farm manager gains use of newer and more efficient equipment without full cost of ownership/operating expenses.</li><li>• Custom operator provides expertise gained from a wider experience.</li><li>• Custom operator maintains required regulatory certification.</li><li>• Farmer can be busy elsewhere while custom operator provides service.</li><li>• No direct repairs and maintenance costs.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Custom operator may not be available at the most optimum time, resulting in reduced yield, product quality and revenue.</li><li>• Farm manager loses direct control of operation.</li><li>• Farm manager is dependent on the availability of custom operators.</li><li>• Risk of weed transfer and other biosecurity concerns is increased.</li><li>• Another relationship to manage to build trust in working together.</li></ul>

Source: Guide to Custom Farmwork and Short-Term Equipment Rental, OMAFA

Some of these are hard to put a dollar figure on but they will filter down and impact your finances in some way.

The partial budget is a simple but effective tool that can help work through the decision process of owning equipment or hiring custom operators. In the partial budget, you only include things that will change if you decide to move forward. It identifies all the consequences, positive and negative, that the proposed change will have on your operation. It will measure

whether the change will pay for itself and what the net effect will be on your business.

Trying to decide whether to hire custom operators rather than purchase manure application equipment is used as an example, Table 2 shows the format of a partial budget and includes the types of factors to think about in this machinery choice.



**Table 2. Partial budget – manure application – custom hire instead of owning**

A. Advantages	B. Disadvantages
<b>Increased revenue –</b> Revenue opportunity gained on owner's money not invested in equipment and available for other uses.	<b>Decreased revenue –</b> No potential for performing custom work or renting out the manure handling equipment.
<b>Decreased costs –</b> Management time spent ensuring all training and regulatory obligations are met.  Machinery operating and ownership costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fuel</li> <li>• Repairs</li> <li>• Labour</li> <li>• Depreciation</li> <li>• Interest</li> <li>• Insurance</li> <li>• Housing</li> </ul>	<b>Increased costs –</b> Custom farmwork charges.  Potential increased weed pressure controls from weed transfer.  Management time on relationship with custom operator.
<b>Net change in returns (A minus B)</b>	

The left side, the advantages, will look at all the benefits. The dollars the owner would have invested in the equipment will be available for other uses, which represents an opportunity to earn a return in another project. The time needed to ensure compliance with all regulations will be shared with or solely taken on by the custom operator. There will not be costs of owning and operating a full line of manure application equipment. The equipment needs for solid and liquid manure will be different, be sure to consider all equipment needed. Loaders, spreaders, tractors, transfer trucks, pit agitators and pumps can all be part of the operation.

Working out expected costs for new equipment can be a challenge since you don't have costs from your own records to draw from. It is important to include all of them for an accurate comparison, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) fact sheet Budgeting Farm Machinery Costs (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/budgeting-farm-machinery-costs>) can help estimate costs.

The right side lists the disadvantages. A potential added revenue source by doing custom farmwork or renting out the equipment is not available. Custom farmwork charges for manure application will be incurred. There may be increased weed control measures to deal with weeds transferred in and added time managing another relationship with a service provider.

All factors that apply to your farm situation should be included. If the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, it makes sense to move forward with the decision, in this case to hire custom farmwork operators.

The next collection of custom farmwork rates will be this fall looking for rates charged in 2024.



If you provide custom farmwork services or hire custom farmwork operators and would like to participate in the custom farmwork rates study, please email [john.molenhuis@ontario.ca](mailto:john.molenhuis@ontario.ca). ■



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# INDUSTRY

## updates



### VFO Executive Director re-appointed to Agency marketing committee

Jennifer Haley, Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) Executive Director, was re-appointed to the Marketing Committee of the Beef Cattle Marketing Agency (the Agency) following their Annual General Meeting in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan this past August. Haley is part of a progressive committee of producers, processors, and foodservice/retail professionals.

The Marketing Committee is responsible for planning and establishing Canada Beef's strategic, business, and operational goals and objectives and for the overall management and operation of the business and affairs.

VFO and the Agency entered into agreements to strengthen Canadian veal

marketing as a part of the larger Canadian beef and veal marketing initiative in early 2020.

### 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.

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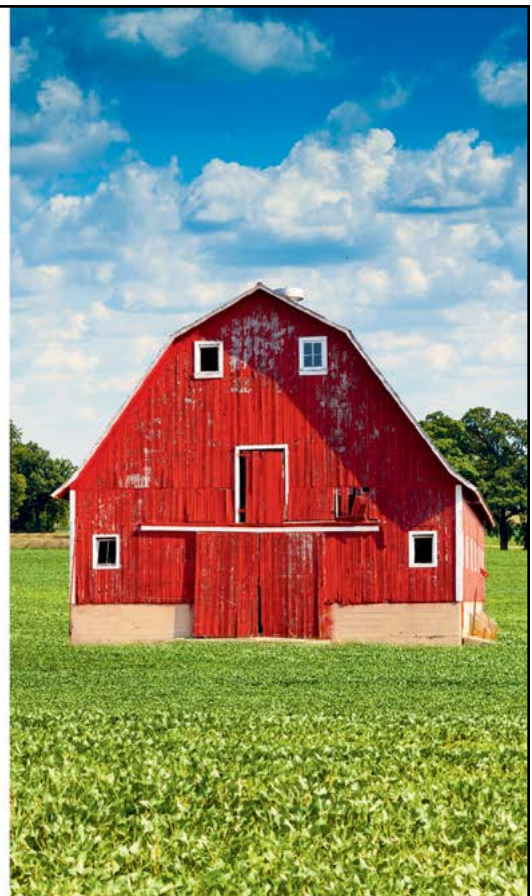
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## HPAI (H5N1) resources

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/influenzaa-h5n1-in-cattle/> as they are made available. In addition, any significant developments related to the veal sector will be shared via email.

## VFO connects with producers at Canada's Outdoor Farm Show

VFO attended Canada's Outdoor Farm Show September 10 to 12, connecting with veal and dairy producer members, discussing industry issues, and distributing resources.

Thank you to everyone who dropped by our booth at the Woodstock event, including current and former Directors and speakers at our upcoming Healthy Calf Conference! We look forward to seeing everyone again in November. ■



Kendra Keels, VFO Industry Development Director and Aaron Keunen, VFO Director.

Photo credit: Farmer Tim



Keels with legacy Ontario Veal Association director Ian Foster.

Healthy Calf Conference speaker Dr. Christine Murray-Kerr from Grober Nutrition.



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# Farm & Food Care Ontario's Mid-year update

Jessica McCann, Communications Coordinator

Farm & Food Care Ontario



More than 200 volunteers were on site at BOTF in Ottawa to engage the community in conversations about Ontario food and farming.



Upon arriving at BOTF in Ottawa, guests were greeted and instructed on the importance of biosecurity to Ontario farms. Each guest was required to walk on the biosecurity mats prior to entering the event.



BOTF Ottawa guests were able to tour Blackrapids farm and see the cattle up close. Farmer volunteers were located throughout the barn to answer any questions that arose.



Farm & Food Care Ontario (FFCO) is pleased to highlight some of the work done in the first half of 2024 – and plans for the coming months. With the support of members, donors and event partners like Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO), FFCO is able to help support the agri-food industry in building strong connections, encouraging meaningful conversations and earning the trust of Ontario consumers through proactive, ongoing programs and activities.

## Breakfast on the Farm

The first Breakfast-type event of 2024 was on April 6, in partnership with the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival. A Farm Discovery Zone was developed to offer attendees a “from the farm” experience. Close-up experiences with livestock, farm equipment, and Ontario farm displays provided accurate information on farming, answered guests’ questions, and helped build relationships.

On June 22, the second Breakfast on the Farm (BOTF) of the year took place at Blackrapids farm just outside of Ottawa. This event saw more than 2,300 guests and volunteers participate. Farm hosts Peter and Rosemary Ruiters welcomed guests from Ottawa and surrounding areas to tour their dairy barn, talk with farmers, and participate in family-friendly activities. More than 20 on-site exhibitors were located throughout the farm.

VFO partnered with FFCO on these events and provided resources that were distributed in both Elmira and Ottawa.

## *The Real Dirt on Farming* digest edition

*The Real Dirt on Farming* digest version (12 pages) can now be ordered in English and French in larger quantities (500/box) to distribute at events easily. This version condenses much of the important information in the full publication into a shortened 12-page format. It is available at <https://www.RealDirtOnFarming.ca>.

## *The Real Dirt on Farming in the Classroom*

FFCO, in partnership with Agriculture in the Classroom Canada (AITC-C), announced the release of *The Real Dirt on Farming in the Classroom* e-learning resource earlier this spring. This comprehensive educational tool aims to provide grade seven to 12 students across Canada with the opportunity to explore key topics related to the agriculture and food industry.

*The Real Dirt on Farming in the Classroom* is listed as a featured resource in the AITC-C Resource Library and is linked through <https://www.RealDirtOnFarming.ca>.

## Farm tour program

FFCO's annual farm tour program supports the objectives of providing credible information on food and farming to key target audiences. Each tour is designed to take guests on an educational journey from the process of farm to fork in Ontario.

This summer and fall, FFCO will host farm tours for culinary students attending Fanshawe, Lambton, Centennial, and Niagara colleges, as well as for food industry professionals in Toronto and Ottawa.



## Faces Behind Food

*Faces Behind Food* continues to be a successful initiative showcasing the diverse people and opportunities present within Canada's agri-food system. As of August 1, 61 profiles have been shared (two per week) on Facebook and Instagram, garnering over 1.5 million impressions.

In June, *Faces Behind Food* featured the profile of VFO board member Kyle Roes. This profile reached more than 17,000 and received overwhelmingly positive feedback on both Instagram and Facebook. FFCO and VFO are looking forward to collaborating further on this project in the future.

## FarmPhotos.ca

VFO and FFCO have collaborated over the past several years to build up a library of accurate and up-to-date photos depicting modern veal farming in Ontario. Many of these photos are now available at <https://www.FarmPhotos.ca>.

This website provides the opportunity to open the barn door and access images of typical Canadian farms. The library was created to provide those in agriculture education, teachers, students, and media with an opportunity to access representative photographs of agriculture. On top of the recent veal farm additions, the library also contains photos of other Canadian livestock, farm families, field crops, vegetables, orchards, fruits, animal care and handling practices, modern barns, environmental initiatives, and food processing plants. ■



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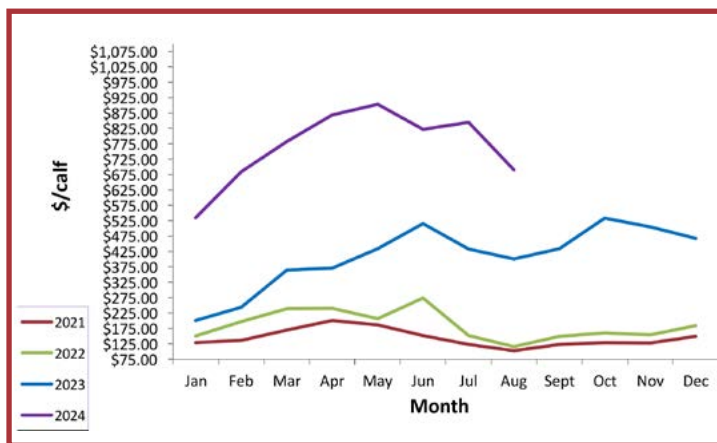




# VEAL MARKET INFORMATION

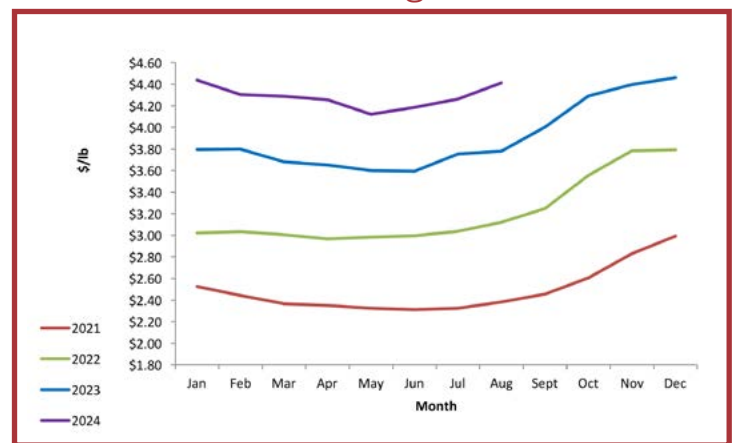
This information is collected from various sources and disseminated by Veal Farmers of Ontario.

## Bob Calf Pricing



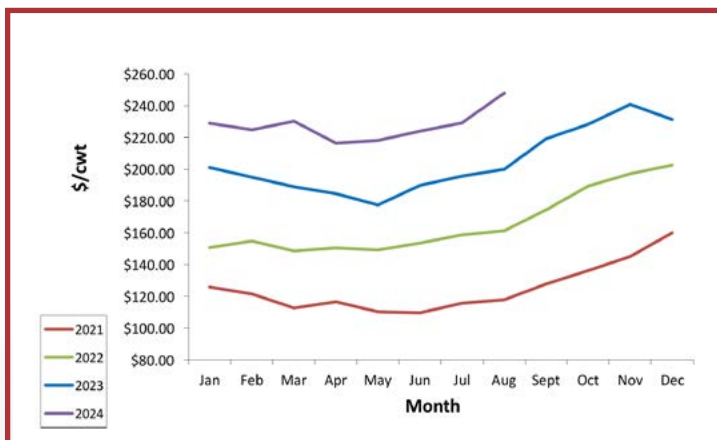
This price range is collected and tabulated from participating sale barns throughout Ontario based on average pricing. This information is used to follow trends.

## Rail Grade Veal Pricing



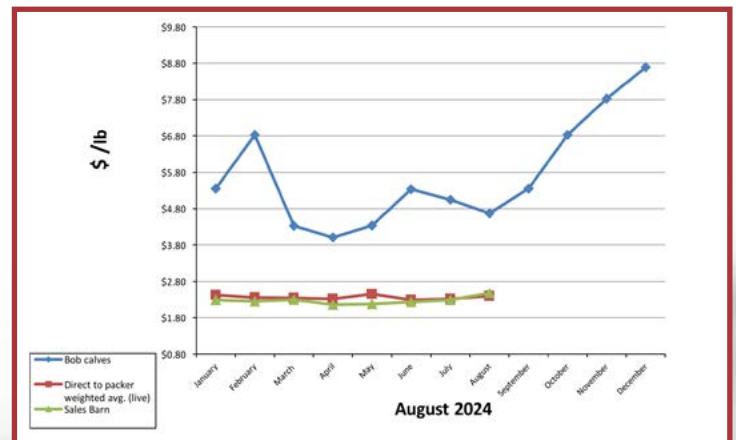
This information is collected from producer contributions on a weekly basis. Once the numbers are collected a weighted average is calculated. The weighted average gives a more realistic price of what is happening in the market. This information is used to follow trends.

## 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.

## Finished price compared to bob calf prices (8 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.

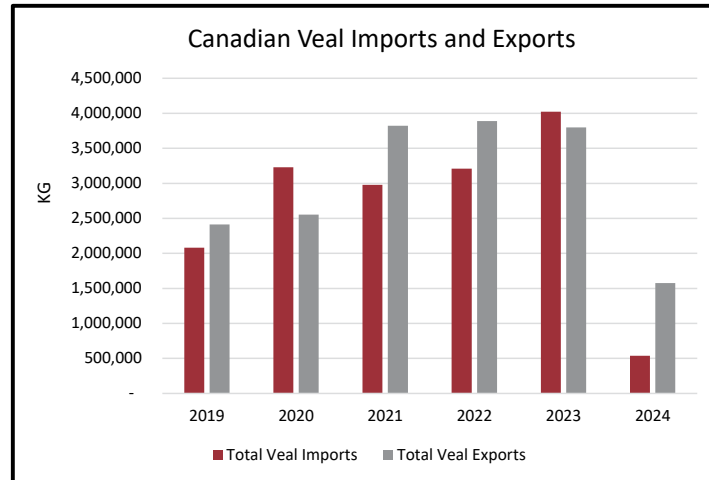




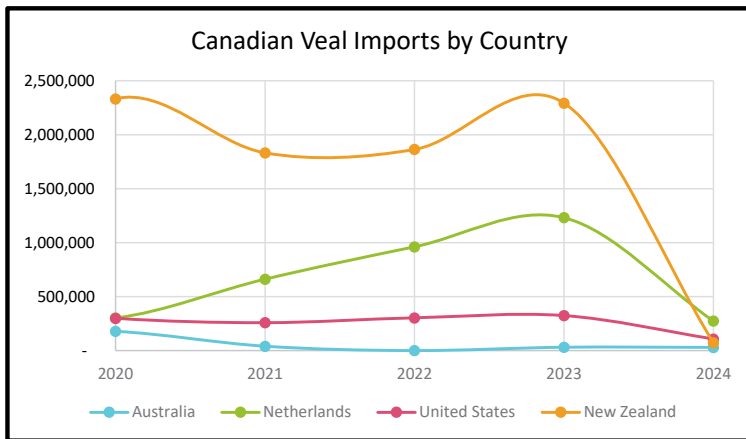
# Veal Trade Tracker

30-Jun-24

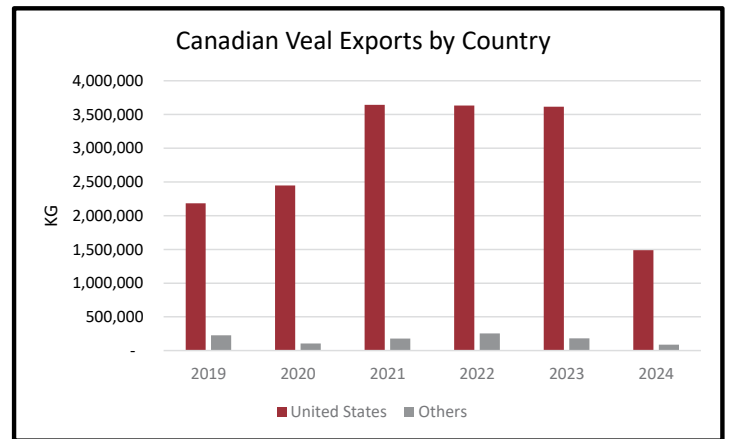
A snapshot of Canada's veal trade



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.



The 2024 numbers represent the time period from January till June. Imports from the Netherlands are down significantly compared to the same time period in 2023. Imports from Australia were received in June for the first time this year.



Veal exports have declined for the same time period as 2023. There was a small increase for June to the United States over May and The United Arab Emirates held steady during January to June 2024.

## FEATURED VEAL RECIPE

# Ontario VEAL appeal

## Veal Saltimbocca

Cut: Scaloppini/Cutlets | Servings: 4

The translation of this name from Italian is “jump in mouth” which is the sensation you get as you bite into a tender piece of this veal topped with fresh sage and prosciutto. All of your taste buds will be tantalized.

### Ingredients:

1/4 cup (50 mL) all-purpose flour  
1/4 tsp (1 mL) each salt and pepper  
1 lb (500 g) Ontario veal scaloppini  
2 tbsp (30 mL) olive oil  
1 cup (250 mL) dry white wine  
4 (2 oz/ 60 g) slices prosciutto, slivered  
8 fresh sage leaves, slivered  
1/4 cup (50 mL) freshly grated Parmesan cheese

### Instructions:

Cut veal into serving sized pieces. In shallow dish, combine flour, salt and pepper. Dip veal into flour, coating both sides and shaking off excess flour. Transfer to waxed-lined plate. Repeat with remaining veal; reserving excess flour.

In a large nonstick skillet, heat a small amount of the oil over medium-high heat. Brown veal in small batches, for about 1 minute per side, adding more oil as necessary between batches. Transfer to large shallow baking dish.

Reduce heat to medium; add 1 tsp (5 mL) of the remaining oil to pan. Sprinkle in reserved flour; cook, stirring, for about 1 minute. Gradually whisk in wine; simmer, stirring, for about 3 minutes or until slightly thickened. Sprinkle sauce with prosciutto, sage and parmesan and stir until combined. (Dish can be cooled, covered and refrigerated for up to 8 hours. Reheat in 350°F (180°C) oven for about 20 minutes or until hot). Pour sauce over veal in dish and serve. ■



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## Licenced dealers

As a veal (bob calves, started/preconditioned calves, and finished veal cattle) producer, you should be dealing with licenced dealers who are remitting veal licence fees/check-off on behalf of the farmers they are collecting from. If you are selling bob calves from your dairy farm, the 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 fees/check-off is remitted on your behalf. Please contact the Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) office to ensure we have your updated contact information, including your email address. If you are dealing with an unlicensed dealer, you are not protected under the Ontario Beef Cattle Financial Protection Program (OBCFPP). You could be in jeopardy of losing the money from the sale, especially if you received a cheque for payment. If it is unclear if the dealer is licenced, ask to see the licence, check the Agricorn website at <https://bit.ly/Agricorndealers> or contact the VFO office.

## 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

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

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# Building the Foundation

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