

THE Connection

Winter 2024 Volume 6, No. 4



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IN THIS ISSUE

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THE Connection

Winter 2024 Volume 6, No. 4



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Chair's MESSAGE



Philip Kroesbergen

Reflecting on VFO's key priorities for 2024

As we finish off the fall season and head into winter, I think it's important to reflect on this past year and both the key priorities that Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) has been working on and the lessons we have learnt as an organization. Time has flown by as we have been busy managing programs and advocating for both our dairy calf and veal producer members, and for the industry at large. I would like to highlight a few of our main programs and Board-identified priorities from 2024 and recognize the effort put into them.

The Ontario's Best Veal Sandwich competition has been the VFO's flagship marketing program for a number of years, with 2024 being our biggest and, in my opinion, the best. After two years of planning and pivoting, the contest was held in Toronto at Roma's Hospitality Centre. Experiencing the finale firsthand showed me the impact of the program, and it was much more than I expected.

The level of energy and excitement at this event was something I do not normally see as a farmer, or for a niche product like veal. It was really encouraging to see that people really enjoy Ontario veal and appreciate the farmers that produce it for them. Our Executive Director Jennifer Haley, and our marketing agent Cara Ferguson and her team, did an amazing job putting together this event. It was also great to see our ambassador John Catucci in his element hosting the event and making it fun for everyone. I think this program is a huge hit and a huge win for our farmers, and I look forward to attending this event again in the future.

Another project that Jennifer Haley and I have dedicated significant resources to is the Risk Management Program (RMP). As costs of production have risen for veal cattle, the amount of funding available for the program has not kept up. This means that if we have a situation in the market where the cost of production is much higher than market pricing, there will not be enough funds to cover losses.

Over the past year, costs incurred by veal producers have not gone down significantly, and the price of bob calves has remained at higher levels. Thankfully with high market prices for finished veal producers have not had a desperate need for additional funds, but what we are seeing in other industries could also become a reality for the veal sector.

This is why VFO has made it a priority to spend time and resources to support the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition (OASC) to advocate for more funding for the RMP program. The OASC group has been working towards a 100-million-dollar goal with former Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) Minister Lisa Thompson, and now with Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAF) Minister Rob Flack. I hope to one day be able to say that the OASC partnership has successfully lobbied for adequate funding for the program to bolster farmers' ability to hedge their risk across our commodities.

One of the most important and strategic decisions made by the VFO Board in 2024 involved the implementation of a licence fee increase. This producer-run organization is the only way that veal producers and our interests can be seen and protected. Without proper representation, marketing strategies, research and education, our industry would not thrive.

As numbers of calves being produced for finished veal decline, the financial resources we have to allocate to the pillars of our strategic plan get reduced. We cannot just keep the lights on. We need to be proactive and engaged in as many ways we can so that our producers can benefit and succeed. I want to thank our industry partners, members and staff for doing their best to adjust to this change and make sure that it's fair and equitable for all VFO members.

There are many activities and projects that the organization does that cannot all be listed, but these are some that should be mentioned. I hope VFO members see the value in what is being done on their behalf. Our people will continue to work hard for producers, and I certainly appreciate it. ■

Join the VFO Board of Directors!

Call for nominations now open

The Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) Board of Directors is asking interested veal and dairy calf producers to get involved with our organization. VFO Directors work on behalf of the sector on projects, issues, and initiatives that benefit our membership, and are responsible for planning and establishing VFO's strategic direction.

Input from directors is vital to maintaining a strong and active voice for our sector. We are seeking candidates from a variety of backgrounds; skill sets and sizes of farm operations. All voting producer members of VFO, with their membership in good standing, are eligible for nomination.

Full-day board meetings are held five to six times throughout the year in the Guelph-area. Between in-person meetings, the Board also meets virtually as needed (virtual meetings are approximately two hours in length).

Directors collaborate with our industry partners on committees in areas of interest that highlight their skill set on both the provincial and national level, represent VFO at meetings and events, and interact with officials at all levels of government. VFO Directors are provided a meeting per diem and reimbursement for approved travel expenses as applicable.

Interested candidates must complete a self-nomination form found at vealfarmers.ca and submit it no later than Friday, January 31, 2025, for review by the Nominating Committee. Nominations from the floor will not be accepted. Elections, if required, will take place at the VFO Annual General Meeting on Wednesday, March 5, 2025.

For more information, and to receive the nominations guide, please contact Jennifer Haley, Executive Director at 519-824-2942 or jhaley@vealfarmers.ca. ■



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Jennifer Haley

One door closes and another one opens

By the time you read this edition of *The Connection*, the finale of the search for Ontario's Best Veal Sandwich (OBVS) has wound up and some of the events leading up to the finale will hopefully be in the rearview mirror. Despite some of the challenges, the OBVS finale this year was our best one yet!

To give you some context, last year, when we started planning for the 2024 OBVS program, we knew that we wanted to extend the reach of the finale to connect directly with consumers. With a number of opportunities to consider, we ended up negotiating a sponsorship package with the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) to be part of their Cooking Stage program. This would provide the contest, and the finale event, promotional exposure through the CNE marketing programs.

The CNE has been well-known for its wide range of food offerings that attract 'foodies' – last year the Top 10 foods to try at the CNE included a 'veal cannoli' (breaded veal cutlet, sauce and cheese all stuffed into a cannoli shell) and when I tried to get my hands on one, they were sold out early in the afternoon already! The CNE has a space dedicated to a cooking stage where there are celebrity chefs cooking up different dishes – in fact last year our friend Chef Ted Reader did a cooking demo for a veal chop!

All was going well until one day in mid-July (keep in mind this is just over a month before the finale was to take place in August), VFO received one email from a person outlining their concerns about the OBVS contest and their intent to email all their animal activist friends to get the CNE to cancel our contest finale. VFO staff went into issue management mode and monitored everything. No additional emails were received despite the call for action. VFO was open and transparent from the start with the CNE, and we learned that they too had received only one email. One email.

Without discussing the situation with us or working on possible solutions, the CNE chose to cancel our contract outright on the spot over concerns about the risk of possible protestors coming to the finale. The CNE touts itself to be North America's oldest agricultural exhibition and its roots are agricultural. However, rather than standing firm, the CNE chose to empower the activists by cancelling our event and erased all mention of the OBVS finale from their marketing materials.

VFO was shocked how this one email from an unknown animal activist set in motion an unprecedented response from the CNE. VFO warned the CNE

that they would only amplify and empower the activists. VFO challenged the CNE to consider their actions and the impact that they would have. As predicted, the activists claimed the cancellation as their victory and went on to try and cancel other agricultural events at the CNE.

Our team was left scrambling to find a suitable venue on such short notice and now with the threat of animal activists' escalation. Working with organizations like Farm & Food Care Ontario, we were able to put in place an action plan that included communications and event planning that would protect all involved. We did not want any of our contest partners to be a target of an animal activist and yet no one backed out. Everyone banded together to stand firm and support the Ontario veal sector.

Our fellow agricultural commodity groups and farm organizations joined forces with a joint letter sent to the CNE Board of Directors expressing concern with the cancellation of VFO's event. If this can happen this easily to VFO, who would be next on the activist's list and what would this mean for the important connection between the consumer and the agri-food sector being promoted by the CNE? As of writing this column, the CNE has yet to acknowledge this letter, or the concerns outlined.

Despite the CNE's actions, the OBVS finale was an amazing success in part because we took a hard pivot, but also because we worked closely with our industry partners to plan and execute the remainder of the program that would protect our restaurant partners, spokespeople and team members while at the same time unabashedly and proudly promoting Ontario veal.

Throughout this whole process, we learned quickly who our allies were. We learned about the amazing power of our newly found friends from the Mystery Judges who love all things Ontario veal, and we learned about the resiliency of our team to be able to face a challenge straight on and still come out on top with so much passion and commitment to do what is right. Without the adversity of the CNE cancellation challenging us to reach higher and farther, who knows what it might have been. But when one door closes and another opens, you walk right through that door! Congratulations to all involved with the 2024 OBVS! ■



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Ontario's Best Veal Sandwich 2024: A tasty tribute to an iconic dish



Since its launch in 2016, the Ontario's Best Veal Sandwich (OBVS) competition has celebrated one of Ontario's most iconic dishes – a hearty, Italian-inspired sandwich that's now woven into the fabric of the province's food culture. Spearheaded by Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO), this flagship consumer program highlights not only Ontario's unique grain-fed veal but builds awareness for the entire veal category with consumers and restaurants alike.

Everyone loves a good veal sandwich, and it has become a classic menu item for all different types of restaurants including quick-serve sandwich shops, food trucks, and even casual dining. Did you know that the veal sandwich traces its roots to post-WWII Ontario when Italian immigrants brought their culinary traditions to Ontario, transforming this thin, breaded veal cutlet topped with rich tomato sauce, cheese, and classic toppings like mushrooms, peppers, onions, and rapini into a lunchtime staple? For many, the mere mention of a veal sandwich equals comfort food at its finest.

The 2024 OBVS competition kicked off in the fall of 2023, as the VFO

team rallied their network of veal processors to enlist restaurants, butcher shops, foodservice distributors, and retail stores to support the contest by reaching out to their restaurant customers and encouraging them to enter the contest.

From our experience with the contest and knowing that the contest itself was continuing to grow and build momentum, we knew that with the 2024 version we had to enlist some help in tasting all the amazing veal sandwiches. The concept of the Mystery Judge was developed as a way to engage consumers who are passionate about veal sandwiches and support the team in our outreach across the province.

By early April, the search for Mystery Judges was on using a targeted social media strategy to attract applicants. We initially hoped to attract a few hundred veal sandwich-eating enthusiasts. Instead, more than 2,000 responses poured in from Ontarians eager to be part of this mouth-watering quest!

It was both amazing and overwhelming to see how excited people were to be part of this OBVS. "One of the most frequent questions we, as judges, get is, 'How do I get your job?'," laughs Jennifer Haley, Executive Director of VFO and lead judge since OBVS first began. "We expected excitement, but this response truly floored our small team!"

With an application and screening process, we selected 264 Mystery

Judges to be part of the OBVS team. They attended in-person or online training sessions led by Haley, food marketing expert Cara Ferguson, and Food Network Canada host, John Catucci. With Catucci's signature humour and expert tips, the judges learned to scrutinize every component of the perfect veal sandwich – from the tenderness of the veal and the crispness of the breading to the flavourful sauce and, of course, the quality of the bread. The energy of participants throughout the training sessions was invigorating and we quickly dubbed them our 'veal army'. With their training complete, the judges were ready to embark on their culinary adventure.

Each restaurant entered in the competition confirmed its participation and verified its use of Canadian veal. More than 80 restaurants across Ontario joined, representing a mix of family-owned eateries and new culinary innovators. The Mystery Judges set out, evaluating each sandwich's quality, creativity, and craftsmanship. After weeks of tastings and deliberations, Ontario's Top 10 veal sandwiches were chosen, igniting anticipation across the province.

The excitement reached new heights as each Top 10 restaurant welcomed the head judging team – including Catucci – for a final, in-depth tasting to determine the top contenders. With so many exceptional entries, narrowing it down was no easy feat. The judges decided to call in additional Mystery Judges to help make the nail-biting decision. In the

end, it came down to two finalists: Fabio's Pizza in St. Catharines and Mettawas Station in Kingsville, the 2022 champion and a 2019 finalist.

The grand finale was set for August 17 at the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE), but a last-minute change forced organizers to adapt. In true OBVS spirit, VFO quickly arranged an exclusive celebration at Roma's Hospitality Centre in Mississauga, keeping the location under wraps until the day of the event. Nearly 100 Mystery Judges, along with many of the Top 10 contenders, their family, industry partners and members of the VFO Board of Directors, gathered for this private celebration. Guests enjoyed live music, delicious Ontario veal hors d'oeuvres, and curated swag bags as John Catucci emceed the live competition. Haley was joined at the judging table by chef, TV personality, and restaurateur Claudio Aprile; cookbook author, chef, and TV personality Emily Richards; and one lucky Mystery Judge drawn from the audience, all tasked with deciding the 2024 champion.

With each bite, the judges marvelled at the quality of the veal cutlets, the delicate yet crispy breading, the complexity of the house-made sauces, and, with Fabio's Pizza, the house-made bread. In a close and thrilling finish, Mettawas Station edged past Fabio's Pizza to hold on to the title of Ontario's Best Veal Sandwich 2024. "Both sandwiches were amazing, and it made the job of choosing just one winner so very hard," says Haley.

Business has been booming for all of the Top 10 finalists with the

marketing and promotion that they have received as part of the OBVS. The OBVS competition has done more than crown a champion; it has fostered a passionate community of veal sandwich enthusiasts and strengthened the connection between Ontario's veal industry and its vibrant restaurant scene. For Ontario's family farms, the OBVS shines a light on the generations of care and commitment behind this iconic sandwich.

Plans are already in the works on how to capture the energy and engagement of the Mystery Judges in other ways to promote Ontario veal to the consumer.

For everyone involved, OBVS is more than just a contest – it's a celebration of Ontario's culinary heritage, family traditions, and the enduring appeal of the veal sandwich, a local treasure to be savoured for generations to come. ■

Congratulations
TOP 10

Ontario's Best Veal Sandwich
Ontario's VEAL appeal

(in alphabetical order)

Aldos Italian Food Truck
Thornhill, ON

Bolton Pizza Panini
Bolton, ON

Gianni's
Toronto, ON

TOP 2! Fabio's Pizza
St. Catharines, ON

Licious Italian Bakery Café
Barrie, ON

Mamma Maria's Ristorante
Chatham, ON

WINNER! Mettawas Station
Kingsville, ON

Nonna's Cucina
Innisfil, ON

Nostra Cucina
Kitchener, ON

Zio's by Giancarlo
Barrie, ON

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Calf care experts draw full house to 20th anniversary Healthy Calf Conference

Lilian Schaer
For Veal Farmers of Ontario

Building the Foundation Healthy Calf Conference 2024



Celebrating
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It was a capacity crowd that gathered in Stratford for the 20th anniversary edition of the popular Healthy Calf Conference. Led by Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO), the one-day event tackled some of the industry's most pressing calf management issues with a line-up of top tier experts.

University of Guelph calf research spotlight

New to the conference program this year was a spotlight on calf research at the University of Guelph. Ph.D. student Hannah McCarthy shared details of her research into feeding transition milk. Calves are born with a naïve immune system and feeding colostrum within hours of birth is considered critical to giving them a healthy start. Producers, however, can also feed calves transition milk in the first two to six days of their lives.

Transition milk is high in Immunoglobulin G (IgG) antibodies, but also contains lactoferrin and IGF-1, a hormone that influences bone and tissue growth.

"Feeding transition milk can improve transfer of passive immunity and gut development, and decrease preweaning diarrhea," said McCarthy.

Post-doc Dr. Lucia Pisoni's research focuses on how to manage transport stress in dairy-beef calves with nutrition. Her work has shown that in calves fed both high and low colostrum levels within hours of birth – 10 litres and two litres respectively – none had failure of passive immunity transfer when they were transported to an assembly centre at 14 days of age.

However, at arrival, calves only fed two litres of colostrum had a body weight about two kilograms lower than the calves who received the higher amount.

"What we learned from our research is that even with higher nutrition,

transport will impact calves," she said, adding that calves should be fed on arrival and not given electrolytes.

Diarrhea is a common problem in calf-rearing, affecting calf health and their average daily gain. Antimicrobials are often given, but when are they most effective? Ph.D. student Dr. Luiza Stachewski Zakia's research is hoping to answer this question.

A calf that is systemically sick likely has dehydration, with sunken eyes, increased rectal temperature, absence of a suckle reflex and trouble standing. If it has at least two of these symptoms, it will need antibiotics, said Zakia, otherwise the treatment may do more harm than good by killing more good bacteria in the gut.

"What we found is that calves given antibiotics at the onset of diarrhea had a similar duration of illness as those we thought were systemically sick; it didn't make the diarrhea shorter," she said. "In fact, calves given antibiotics right at onset were more likely to die and had lower average daily gain."

Pain management for calves

Pain control is more effective if done early, and Dr. Charlotte Winder of the University of Guelph discussed various pain interventions producers can use for different procedures or in different situations.

Removing horns, for example, is much less painful and invasive the

earlier it is done in a calf's life. Disbudding – whether by a disbudding iron or a caustic paste – will kill the tissue so it doesn't form a horn, but there is no clear guidance at how old calves should be for the procedure.

"There are no studies looking at impact of age in disbudding, but do it well ahead of weaning," said Winder. "Weaning will be most stressful for calves, so disbudding ahead of time to give them a chance to heal will avoid issues during weaning."

Calves should be given both a local anesthetic and an anti-inflammatory to suppress pain both during and after the procedure.

When it comes to castration, all methods will cause pain, but a combination of local anesthetic and an anti-inflammatory will help control the impact. Winder suggested working with a veterinarian to determine which method, whether knife or band – is most appropriate.

Respiratory diseases and navel infections can also be treated with anti-inflammatories to reduce pain, fever and other discomfort in sick calves.

"If we can use pain mitigation before a procedure or as early as possible in disease conditions, it will be more effective. The nervous system is sensitized to transmission of pain, and we know that pain control is more effective if done early," she said.

Taking the challenge out of weaning

Without a doubt, one of if not the most stressful periods of a calf's life is weaning.

"You can do a lot of things wrong, but if you do it consistently, it's better than changing it up all the time," said Kathleen Shore of Grand Valley Fortifiers in kicking off her presentation on how to help calves through the weaning process.

According to Shore, weaning is a stage setting calves up for the next step, and it's important to not create immunity challenges for the animals by stressing them out. While the timing of when to wean can depend on the vitality of the calf, a major way to minimize stress is to develop standardized processes that are slow, repeatable and consistent.

"The ultimate goal of weaning is to create a smooth transition from pre-ruminant to ruminant; research says smooth transition decreases illness and death and increases gain," she said. "It requires adequate size and function of the rumen; the rumen has to work for the calf to be able to digest and if it's not ready the calf will go backwards."

Consistency is the key so avoid too much heat or cold, ensure good air circulation, and use patience when handling the animals.

"The early years affect how the animal will digest for the rest of their lives so in a calf, we have about 60 days to set them up for success. The gut microbiome changes very gradually during weaning and when something goes wrong nutritionally, the immune system has less to work with to develop a strong animal," she said.

A gradual wean through a step-down process is best so the calves can adjust to what their new existence looks like. That could take the form of reducing meals or gradually reducing total milk consumption. This will drive them to gradually eat more grain; giving them a bit of hay can also be effective.

Moving calves into groups before weaning will also improve their performance as it takes one less stressor out of the mix.

"Weaning should be a protocol on-farm with clear steps on what you want done," she says. "Take the time to do it well and it will pay off in dividends if the animals are ready, well-fed and healthy before weaning."



Cattle health update and biosecurity recommendations

Current disease pressures facing the industry include long-time issues like respiratory diseases and calf diarrhea, but *Salmonella* Dublin has emerged as the most common form of *Salmonella* seen in the industry.

That's according to veterinarian Dr. Cynthia Miltenburg of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, who noted that the disease is resistant to antimicrobials, so common respiratory treatment protocols often don't work.

"This is why best biosecurity practices are important. You can easily bring in a new pathogen on people or vehicles, so own your biosecurity," she says. "There are many tools out there to evaluate your biosecurity, so set the standard on what you need and want from your team and your visitors."

Preconditioning and early disease detection to minimize antimicrobial use for respiratory disease

The conference's keynote speaker was Dr. Bart Pardon, a professor at Ghent University in Belgium, who highlighted some of his research into reducing antimicrobial use for respiratory diseases through preconditioning and early disease detection.

There is huge pressure in Europe to reduce antimicrobial use, which is a challenge for the industry, he noted, but long term will give way to more sustainable production.

"The prevailing thought in Europe now is that industries that are unable to live without mass medication need to be rethought or abandoned and the veal industry is one that is in the scope of the EU authorities," he said. "There is no need to panic, however, because there is so much knowledge that we can use that we currently don't do."

One tool is preconditioning calves to ensure they are fit for transport, which includes good body weight, sufficient colostrum uptake, and vaccination. As well, calves should be clinically healthy with no pneumonia showing on the ultrasound and *Mycoplasma bovis* negative status.

Lung ultrasonography is a game-changer on the farm; it takes only one to two minutes per calf and is the most reliable way to detect pneumonia and do so before a calf displays clinical signs.

"Early detection and short therapy are better cures, but you have to find calves in the subclinical phase before they start to show visible signs of disease," he says. "That's where the lung ultrasound is a golden opportunity. It requires training and dedication but it's a great tool that can help move the industry forward."

A more detailed article on Dr. Pardon's presentation will be published in the next issue. ■

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Ontario cattle health update and biosecurity practices

Dr. Cynthia Miltenburg

on behalf of the Ontario Animal Health Network



Photo credit: Paul Pennington

In Ontario, the bovine Ontario Animal Health Network meets on a quarterly basis to review data collected from laboratory submissions and field veterinarians' observations. Regular review of this information allows our network to communicate with veterinarians and industry on changing animal health risks in Ontario. This article will share a few highlights from our last year of surveillance for cattle in Ontario and review some best practices to avoid the introduction of new disease pathogens.

Salmonella Dublin

Salmonella Dublin (S. Dublin) continues to be a challenge for cattle producers with regular detections in diagnostic laboratory samples and new premises becoming infected. In 2024, there have been 25 detections of S. Dublin between January and October. Detections are clustered in the summer and fall months. The network hypothesizes this may be associated with calving patterns and pressure on calf housing, ambient temperatures, and typical fall respiratory disease risk factors. In 2023, lab detections were estimated to represent 16 disease outbreaks on 14 unique farms. For nine farms (two veal, four dairy, and three beef), this is believed to be the first time S. Dublin was detected on the farm.

S. Dublin has become the most frequently identified Salmonella species on laboratory submissions from cattle farms. In 2023 and 2024, three-quarters of bovine Salmonella detections were S. Dublin.

Bovine viral diarrhoea virus

Testing for bovine viral diarrhoea virus (BVD) occurs weekly at the provincial diagnostic lab. Approximately 2.5 per cent of cattle samples tested over the last year were positive for BVD. Samples tested are a mix of samples from suspect cattle with clinical signs that are consistent with BVD as well as samples collected as part of routine herd screening programs. Given the regular detection of positive results each month, BVD remains a risk in the province.

Neonatal diarrhoea

Calf diarrhoea is an ongoing challenge for calves in the preweaning period. Laboratory testing in Ontario shows that Rotavirus, Cryptosporidium and Coronavirus have high test positivity on submissions from calves in the zero-to-six weeks of age group. In 2024, there has been a trend for a higher number of positive submissions with E. coli compared to previous years.

Practical biosecurity

Given this information, preventing the introduction of new disease pathogens continues to be a priority for calf raisers. Disease can be introduced by the purchase of animals carrying a pathogen, or on contaminated vehicles, equipment or footwear from other premises. Biosecurity can work to minimize the risk of introduction of disease and reduce spread within an operation if introduced. Biosecurity is a big topic that includes practices around cattle purchase, manure management, sanitation, and others. To minimize risk, a few elements producers are encouraged to consider include:

- 1. Limiting purchase and isolating new additions** – Herds purchasing animals have a greater risk of becoming positive for S. Dublin. Purchasing from negative dairy herds as evidenced by a negative bulk tank test and negative individual blood test can reduce risk. New additions to dairy farms should be isolated for three to four weeks. This includes animals that leave for another farm or site and return to the home farm. For veal, sourcing from as few herds as possible can reduce risk. Segregating newly received calves from the general barn population upon arrival and maintaining stable groups (all in/all out) can reduce disease transmission.
- 2. Biosecurity for visitors** – Many diseases are transmitted via the fecal-oral route so contaminated boots, clothing, trailers, and vehicles are a risk for introduction. Ideally, do not have visitors enter cattle housing unless necessary and ensure all visitors wear clean coveralls and boots to reduce the risk of contaminated manure entering the cattle housing area.
- 3. Shared equipment** – The low infective dose of some diseases means an increased risk of becoming infected if your neighbour has a positive disease status due to the movement of people and equipment between properties. Ensure shared equipment is cleaned and disinfected, including livestock trailers. Bringing cattle out to transporters will minimize the need for their entry into cattle housing areas.
- 4. Biosecurity between cattle age groups** – Designated boots for the calf area only on dairy farms can reduce movement of material from adult housing to calf housing and protect youngstock. Washing and disinfecting boots between age groups on veal farms can limit spread, particularly to new, naïve calves.

Producers can use industry program checklists or review their biosecurity with herd advisors to find gaps that can be targeted. High standards for yourself and others that visit your farm will protect animal health and livelihoods. ■



Photo credit: Jayne Dietrich

A designated location where boots are changed prior to entering calf housing can minimize introduction of outside material.



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



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Warm and safe: Winterizing your calf hutches



Kendra Keels
Industry Development Director



Winter presents unique challenges for calf management, particularly when it comes to housing. Calf hutches are a popular choice for providing young calves with a safe and controlled environment. However, harsh winter conditions, including high winds and heavy snowfall, require special considerations to ensure the hutches remain secure and the calves stay healthy.

The benefits of calf hutches

Calf hutches offer several advantages, especially during the winter months. The controlled environment within the hutch allows for better temperature regulation, protecting calves from extreme cold. Additionally, hutches can be easily cleaned and disinfected, maintaining a high standard of hygiene.

Preparing for winter

Before winter sets in, it's crucial to prepare the calf hutches to withstand the season's challenges.

Below are some key steps to take:

- 1. Insulation:** Ensure the hutches are well-insulated to keep the calves warm. Adding straw bedding can provide additional insulation and comfort. Aim for a bedding depth of at least 12 inches (30 cm). This allows the calf to nest and trap a layer of warm air around itself, reducing heat loss. Find out more in the Veal Farmers of Ontario resource "A producer guide to evaluating nesting scores" here: <https://calfcare.ca/management/a-producer-guide-to-evaluating-nesting-scores/>
- 2. Ventilation:** Proper ventilation is essential to prevent respiratory issues. Make sure the hutches have adequate airflow without exposing the calves to drafts.
- 3. Positioning:** When setting up your calf hutches for winter, it's important to consider both the prevailing winds and the sun's position. Proper placement can significantly enhance the comfort and health of your calves.

Natural windbreaks: Place the hutches in a location that offers some natural windbreak, such as near a building or a row of trees. This helps shield the hutches from direct wind gusts, reducing the risk of cold stress.

Face south: In colder climates, position the hutches to face south. This orientation maximizes sun exposure during the winter months, helping to keep the hutches warmer and more comfortable for the calves.

Anchoring hutches against high winds

One of the biggest concerns during winter is securing the hutches against high winds. Here are some effective methods to anchor them:

- 1. Ground anchors:** Use ground anchors or stakes to secure the hutches. These can be driven into the ground at each corner of the hutch, providing a stable base.
- 2. Sandbags:** Placing sandbags around the base of the hutch can add weight and stability. This method is particularly useful if the ground is too frozen for anchors.
- 3. Tethering:** Use ropes or straps to tether the hutches to nearby structures or heavy objects. Ensure the tethers are tight and check them regularly for wear and tear.
- 4. Snow barriers:** Create snow barriers around the hutches to reduce wind exposure. Piling snow around the base can act as a natural windbreak.

Monitoring and maintenance

Regular monitoring and maintenance are fundamental during the winter months. Check the hutches daily to ensure they remain secure and that the calves are comfortable. Pay attention to the following:

- **Bedding:** Keep the bedding dry and clean. Wet bedding can lead to cold stress and health issues.
- **Water supply:** Ensure the calves have access to fresh, unfrozen water. Heated waterers can be a good investment.
- **Health checks:** Monitor the calves for signs of illness or stress. Early detection and intervention are key to maintaining their health.

Conclusion

Using calf hutches in the winter demands thorough preparation and consistent upkeep. Ensuring that the hutches are well-insulated, properly ventilated, and securely anchored is key to providing a safe and comfortable environment for your calves. Regular monitoring and meticulous attention to detail will help you overcome the challenges of winter, ensuring your calves stay healthy and thrive. By carefully considering these factors, you can create a more secure and cozy environment for your calves during the harsh winter season. ■



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Feed bunk management for veal cattle

James Byrne, Beef Cattle Specialist

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness

Proper feed bunk management is critical to achieve consistent sustainable animal growth performance. Bunk management is a common topic for discussion amongst producers because it is a central practice to feeding cattle. Factors such as adequate bunk space, proper health management, and facilities to maintain cattle comfort also contribute to successful feed bunk management. Bunk management as a strategy requires time and attention but when executed effectively, bunk management practices can pay dividends in the form of improved efficiencies and cattle performance.

Improper bunk management can result in digestive disorders, inconsistent dry matter intake, and poor performance, and it ultimately affects the bottom line. It is estimated that poor bunk management can reduce dry matter intake and average daily gain by up to 10 to 15 per cent. Bunk management plays a big role in maintaining rumen health.

Slick bunk management is the practice by which the amount of feed offered closely matches maximal feed intake of the cattle resulting in a 'slick' or empty feed bunk just before the next feeding time. It is an effective approach to managing feed intake and reducing feed waste when managed well. Situations where cattle are offered feed ad-libitum or inconsistent deliveries can lead to yo-yo intakes and the reoccurrence of off-feed incidences.



Picture 1: Daytime image of a feed bunk from a trail camera. Note condition of bunk. Picture courtesy: Megan Van Schaik, OMAFA. 2020

The challenge is striking a balance between overfeeding and underfeeding. The goal of slick bunk management is matching feed deliveries to dry matter intake (DMI) to achieve desired performance. Concerns with leaving the bunk empty for too long include poor gains, reduced feed efficiency, reduced carcass quality, longer days on feed, and increased

risk of digestive upsets (fluctuating intake) which can lead to other health issues.

Academic research and practical experience tell us that success in bunk management is anchored in consistency and diligence in monitoring. Consistency is important in many aspects of feeding, including timing of feeding, timing of when bunks are read before feed deliveries, the person reading bunks and delivering feed, feed mixing order and mixing time. Promoting consistency in feed delivery helps to stabilize ruminal fermentation and pH to improve feed efficiency. There is a large body of evidence that supports the practice of feeding multiple times a day (more than once) to improve performance of cattle. Feeding less, more often helps to reduce stress on cattle coming to the bunk by decreasing aggression. With increased feeding frequency, cattle generally consume less at each visit but visit the bunk more, resulting in more consistent feed intake and better rumen health.

A 2020 bunk management project jointly coordinated by the Ontario Corn Fed Beef Program (OCFBP) and OMAFA demonstrated the impacts of bunk management on feeding behaviour in finishing cattle. This work highlighted the importance of understanding the length of time the feed bunk is empty, consistency in daily feeding activities, assessing bunk scores (feed disappearance) and pushing up feed as bunk design necessitates. Figure 1 provides an example of the impact of feeding activities on feeding behaviour in finishing cattle.



Figure 1. Feeding behaviour and bunk score over time, where time "0" is midnight.

Avoiding long periods of empty bunks

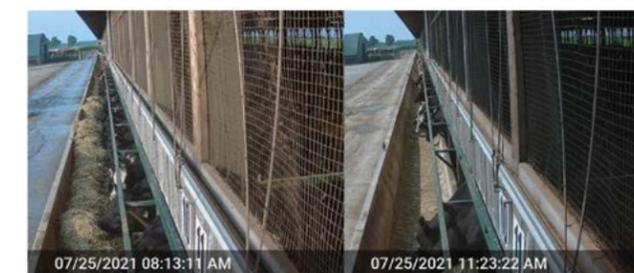
We often discuss consistency in timing of feeding as being one of the

tenets of good bunk management. Scheduling feed deliveries during the shoulders of the day allows for other farm activities or off-farm work to be completed, however these feed delivery times also match the biphasic feeding behaviours of cattle, where cattle naturally tend to increase their feeding activity early mid-morning and later afternoon. Cattle are also creatures of habit and therefore consistency in feeding is key. Having consistency in feeding times allows for more accurate and effective assessment of dry matter intake (i.e., 'reading bunks'), particularly in slick-bunk programs where the goal is to feed cattle to appetite without running empty bunks for too long (more than one to two hours before next feeding).

While each cattle feeder will develop their own approach to using information from bunk reading, the use of a bunk scoring tool such as the 4-point bunk management tool developed by South Dakota State University (SDSU) can help an operator collect important information on DMI every day. This scoring system is most effective when it is used to read bunks daily and when the information is used to make decisions for feed deliveries over several days.

Table 1. SDSU 4-point bunk scoring system

Score	Description
0	No feed remaining in bunk.
½	Scattered feed present. Most of bottom of bunk exposed.
1	Thin uniform layer of feed across bottom of bunk. Typically, about one corn kernel deep.
2	25 to 50 per cent of previous feed delivery remaining.
3	Crown of feed is thoroughly disturbed. More than 50 per cent of previous day's feed remains.
4	Feed is virtually untouched. Crown of previous day's feed still noticeable or undisturbed.



Picture 2: The image on the left shows the bunk with full feed, (bunk score 4), after morning feeding and the image on the right shows feed depleted within a few hours, (bunk score ½). Picture courtesy: Megan Van Schaik, OMAFA. 2021.

For example, the information can be used to decide whether:

Feed deliveries should be increased. Increases in feed deliveries should be considered after observing three to four days of a slick bunk (i.e., score of 0) when the bunk is read before feeding.

Feed deliveries should be reduced. Reducing delivered feed should be considered after observing two days of feed left in bunk (i.e., score of 1 or more) to avoid overfeeding and deterioration of feed quality.

Feed deliveries should be maintained. A bunk score between 0 and 1 suggests that intake is consistent, and feed deliveries can be maintained.

Keep in mind that making aggressive changes to feed deliveries can disrupt intake and cause yo-yo feeding behaviour. Gradual changes reduce the potential for feed intake disruptions and digestive upsets, where changes to feed deliveries do not exceed three to five per cent on a dry matter basis. The next level of using bunk scoring is graphing this data over time, which allows the operator to visually see trends in dry matter intake over a feeding period.

There are lots of factors going into making feed delivery decisions (sometimes referred to as 'feed calls'), including cattle behaviour, manure consistency, cattle health, weather patterns, etc. Ideally feed calls are made by the same person every day. Those making feed calls should be familiar with the pen of cattle and recent history of feed deliveries.

Observing the aggressiveness of cattle at the bunk is another monitoring mechanism that when paired with bunk scoring can help an operator understand the appetite of cattle and guide decision-making when it comes to feed deliveries. It is desirable to see about 25 per cent of cattle approaching the bunk for feed during feeding. Observing overly aggressive cattle during feeding is often an indication that cattle are hungry. ■

Note: This article has been adapted from OMAFA Virtual Beef articles by Megan Van Schaik regarding bunk management for feedlot cattle. The principals of bunk management described are relevant to veal cattle.

References available upon request.

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Measuring your farm's financial performance

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



Farm financial analysis is a valuable tool for farm operations, providing insights into their financial health and performance.

Using a standard farm financial reporting format allows for consistent comparisons within a commodity and across farm types. Table 1 shows a reporting format being adopted more widely in Canadian agriculture that breaks down farm expenses into five categories showing the types of costs included in each category. The first three categories (cost of goods sold (COGS), direct operating and operating overhead) are operating costs with the first two closely related to production, while the third category is more about the overall operating costs of a farm business. The last two categories (annual cost of capital and interest) are related to managing capital. This separation of categories recognizes that managing farm operations is different than managing capital investments.

Table 1. Standardized Farm Financial Reporting.

Farm Revenue	Revenue from farming operations
Cost of Goods Sold	Feed, livestock purchases, vet, breeding, crop inputs
Direct Operating Expenses	Operating labour, fuel, repairs, custom work, marketing costs
Operating Overhead Expenses	Utilities, insurance, office, professional fees, management labour
Annual Cost of Capital	Depreciation, leases, rent, property taxes
Interest Expense	Operating and term loan interest

The costs included in the categories are defined by these activities:

- **COGS** are the direct inputs that are transformed into the outputs or farm yield. For veal operations feed and livestock purchases would be the bulk of this category,
- **Direct operating expenses** are what you need to transform your direct inputs into what you sell, like machinery and labour,

- **Operating overhead expenses** are the administrative elements you need to run a business,
- **Annual costs of capital** are the cost to access assets by owning, renting or leasing, and
- **Interest expense** is the cost of borrowing operating and term capital funds.

Margins and ratios for each category are used to measure performance.

Margins. Farm revenue minus each of these cost categories presents a margin. Table 2 lays out the margins by cost category.

Ratios. Ratios are created by dividing the cost category and a margin by farm revenue. This measures how efficiently inputs (costs) are used to produce outputs (revenue). For example, if Gross margin (Farm revenue minus COGS) is \$30,000 and Farm Revenue is \$100,000, the Gross margin ratio is $\$30,000/\$100,000 \times 100 = 30\%$, meaning 30 per cent farm revenue is left after paying COGS expenses.

Table 2. Standardized Farm Financial Reporting – Margins.

Gross Margin	Farm revenue minus COGS
Contribution Margin	Farm revenue minus COGS and Direct Operating Expenses
EBITDAR (Operating Efficiency): Earnings interest, income taxes, depreciation, amortization, rent	Farm revenue minus COGS, Direct Operating, and Operating Overhead before Expenses
EBIT (Operating Profit): Earnings before interest and taxes	Farm revenue minus COGS, Direct Operating, and Operating Overhead Expenses, and Annual Cost of Capital
EBT (Farm Profit): Earnings before taxes	Farm revenue minus COGS, Direct Operating, and Operating Overhead Expenses, Annual Cost of Capital and Interest Expense

The margins and ratios provide insight into farm performance and can help pinpoint areas that may need improvement. One of the key margins is Earnings Before Taxes, Interest, Depreciation, Amortization and Rent (EBTIDAR). EBITDAR measures how efficiently the farm generates cash to cover its operating costs and what is available to pay capital costs.

With the ratios, areas may need further investigation into the cost category to diagnose issues. By cost category these are the types of things to consider as possible causes:

- **COGS** – since this area is the most closely linked to the output production, a high ratio in this area can point to both revenue and cost side factors:
 - Production: is productivity on target in terms of average daily gains, feed conversion, and end weights,
 - Market prices: are your marketing efforts and avenues as effective as they can be,
 - Input prices and quantities used: on the cost side of veal operations both the cost of calves and feed will be the main contributors to this category both in prices paid and quantities.
- **Direct operating expenses** – are labour and machinery being used to their full capacity,

- **Operating overhead expenses** – this area is a combination of overhead costs, check for the highest cost expenses in the category if there are issues,
- **Annual costs of capital** – a high ratio in this area can signal the farm is over capitalized or assets are underutilized,
- **Interest expense** – are debt levels too high, does debt need restructuring or reduced by selling underutilized assets.

These can be used internally to understand your cost structure and track your progress over time. Looking at the measures over the years can highlight trends and where they typically range for your operation. For livestock finishing operations like veal, COGS is the largest cost category by far. Livestock finishing operations like beef feedlot and swine finishing on average have COGS in the 73 to 83 per cent of farm revenue range with some of the more efficient operations achieving 64 per cent. Lower COGS improves your gross margin which improves your ability to pay the other cost categories.

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) Farm Financial Analyzer is a farm analysis tool designed to measure profitability and financial efficiency. The program allows you to enter financial information and summarizes your financial performance using the standardized reporting format. It is available for download at: <https://ontario.ca/page/farm-business-decision-calculators>. ■

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New Veal Market Report App available to download

Veal Farmers of Ontario is pleased to report that the Veal Market Report App has been successfully updated. This update should allow you to utilize all the reports you have come to depend on, confident that they will integrate with the requirements of modern technology.

The app shares weekly veal market reports based on live sales derived from auction market data submitted to the Beef Farmers of Ontario and other provincial commodity groups, as well as submissions from participating producers and sales barns.

	RAIL	LIVE
Range this week	\$4.85-5.20	\$2.65-2.84
Weighted average (delivered)	\$5.04	\$2.75
Last week's range	\$4.80-5.20	\$2.26-2.84
Last week's weighted average	\$5.03	\$2.74
Last year's weighted average	\$4.45	\$2.43

Why did the Veal Market Report App need to be updated?

The original app was developed in the early years of app development, since then many new security and privacy protocols, as well as app development methods, have been updated.

Both the **Apple App Store** and **Google Play** insisted that updates be made for privacy and security reasons, as well as for compatibility reasons.

Download the new version of the Veal Market Report App now.



What does this mean for you?

If you have the original Veal Market Report App on your phone, you will need to **remove (delete) the original app** from your phone, and then download the new version.

When you open the app, it will ask you if you allow notifications from the app. We highly recommend that when you are setting up the app,

you **ALLOW** notifications, so that you will be notified when the reports are updated each week – it is one of the key benefits of the Veal Market Report App.

What if I don't re-install the app?

The original Veal Market Report App may continue to work for a little while, but it will eventually stop working. Also, you will not receive notifications when reports are posted. We highly recommend you download the new app as soon as possible so that you can continue to receive the information you need as a veal producer.

We have added a few new features and information as well to make the Veal Market Report App more consistent with the current version of the Weekly Veal Market Information Report available on our website.

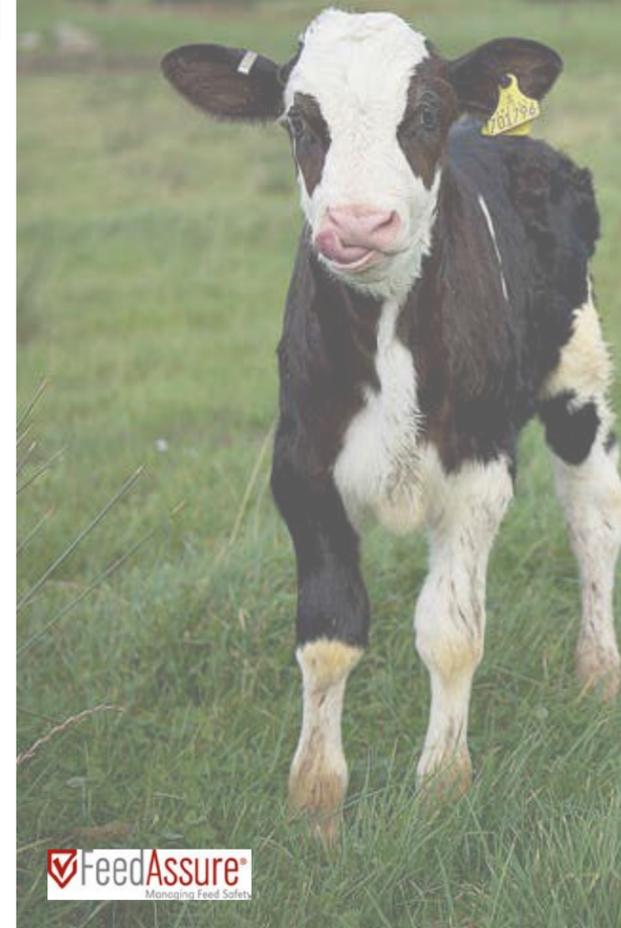
New to apps?

If you did not previously use the app, give it a try now, the Veal Market Report App will help you stay up to date with the latest statistics, allowing you to make critical management decisions with the most current information

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Central to Mapleview's success is its unwavering commitment to research and innovation. At the core of this commitment is their state-of-the-art 256-calf research facility, operational since 2016. This advanced research hub allows them to develop and validate products aimed at optimizing calf performance, while also leading efforts in increasing antimicrobial stewardship.

In addition to in-house research, Mapleview collaborates with universities across North America. They also conduct external trials for leading pharmaceutical, nutraceutical, and feed additive companies, ensuring their products remain at the cutting edge of calf nutrition. These research partnerships keep Mapleview Agri at the forefront of calf health advancements.



A recent research trial at the Mapleview facility, conducted in partnership with Dr. Joao Costa from the University of Vermont, explored the effects of increasing medium-chain fatty acids (MCFAs) in milk replacer on the health and performance of pre-weaned Holstein calves.

The trial had a sample size of 128 calves, sourced from dairy farms and auctions. The groups received milk replacers with either 20% or 30% MCFAs derived from coconut oil. **Results showed that calves in the 30% MCFA group achieved an average daily weight gain of 2.69 lbs compared to 2.51 lbs in the 20% group (P = 0.014), while also consuming 0.44 lbs more grain daily (P = 0.009).** No significant health differences were noted between the groups.

The study's findings suggest that higher MCFA inclusion in milk replacers enhances both dry matter intake and growth rates in calves.

As a result of this research, Mapleview has updated its product formulations to incorporate higher levels of MCFAs, aiming to optimize growth and performance through improved fat formulation techniques.

Over the years, Mapleview Agri research has made significant strides in advancing livestock nutrition, particularly through innovative approaches in milk replacer formulation. One of their key accomplishments has been the successful validation of functional proteins for use in milk replacers across Canada.

In addition to this, the research team has refined formulations that blend casein and whey proteins, recognizing that while nutritional specifications can be met in many ways, the quality and composition of both protein and energy sources are critical. These factors can drastically affect growth and performance in young animals.

Through ongoing experimentation and product validation, Mapleview Agri research continues to lead the way in enhancing milk replacer technologies.

In an exciting new chapter for the company, **Mapleview Agri Ltd is expanding its operations with the construction of a state-of-the-art production facility, warehouse, internal lab and office in Teviotdale, Ontario.** This new facility, set to be completed over the next year, will help Mapleview meet growing demand, improve production capabilities, and increase operational efficiency, further cementing their role as a leader in the calf nutrition industry.



Mapleview Agri milk replacer can be purchased through their extensive dealer network across Canada. Product information, a dealer locator tool, farmer testimonials and expanded research trial information can be found at www.MapleviewAgri.ca.

Important update: Changes to CFIA Ontario Area Animal Health Emergency Response After-Hours Line

Please be advised of the changes to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) Ontario Area Animal Health Emergency Response After-Hours Line.

Effective December 3, 2024, the service hours for the CFIA's Ontario Area Animal Health Emergency Response After-Hours Line (1-877-814-2342) will be adjusted. The new hours of operation will be:

- **Weekdays:** 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
- **Weekends and Holidays:** 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

This change means the line will no longer be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Purpose of the After-Hours Line

This dedicated communications channel is crucial for coordinating and responding to urgent animal health emergency situations. It should be used exclusively to report:

- Suspected foreign animal diseases (e.g., Foot and Mouth Disease, Notifiable Avian Influenza)
- Humane transportation issues
- Transportation accidents involving livestock or poultry

Non-emergency inquiries

Please note that this number is not intended for non-emergency inquiries. For all non-emergency requests, including import/export and pet information, please contact a CFIA office during normal business hours (8 a.m. to 4 p.m.). ■

For further information, please contact your local CFIA office.

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INDUSTRY

updates



VFO joins leaders as OASC meets with Minister Flack

Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) Chair Philip Kroesbergen joined industry leaders as part of the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition (OASC) in a late August meeting with the Honourable Rob Flack, Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness to discuss Ontario's Risk Management Program (RMP).

The coalition was formed in 2009 to develop and implement the RMP program in Ontario at the request of the Government of Ontario.



VFO celebrates Ontario Agriculture Week 2024

Held October 7 to 13, 2024, Ontario Agriculture Week is an opportunity to recognize and appreciate the bounty of food produced by our farmers, the dedicated individuals employed in the industry, and the vibrant rural communities that benefit from agriculture. VFO shared a series of posts on social media, thanking our supply chain partners, promoting the FarmFood360° video we partnered with Farm & Food Care Ontario on, and celebrating our pride in veal farming using the hashtags #ONTAgWeek and #LoveONfood.

VFO launches carcass benchmarking study

VFO recently received funding through to the end of 2025 to conduct the Ontario Veal Quality Audit Carcass Benchmark Study. This study will build on the 2015 Veal Carcass Benchmarking Study, which investigated the state of the veal industry in Ontario at that time.

This updated study involves veal producer, plant, and retailer participation. It is important to capture these snapshots in time in the veal sector. If you wish to participate in the direct to packer portion, please contact Kendra Keels at the VFO office to discuss.

VFO shares resources with students

This fall, VFO had the opportunity to share complimentary copies of the *Building the Foundation for Healthy Calves II* manual and other resources with students at the University of Guelph, Ridgetown Campus. If you're hosting a meeting, event, or 4-H club, reach out to info@vealfarmers.ca to order your copies!

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VFO attends Harvest Gala celebrating excellence in Ontario agriculture

VFO staff attended the Farm & Food Care Ontario (FFCO) Harvest Gala on November 28. VFO was pleased to attend the annual fundraising event to show our support of FFCO and appreciated the opportunity to connect with Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Agribusiness Rob Flack and Parliamentary Assistant John Jordan.



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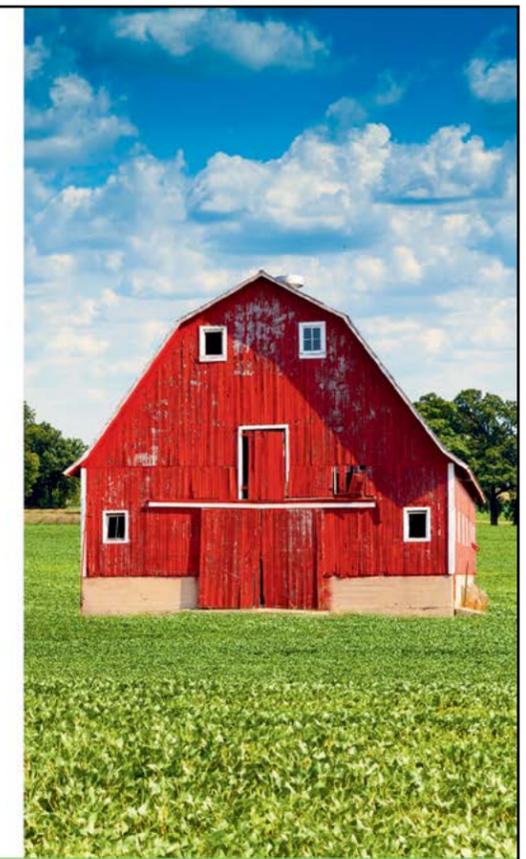
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Is centralized transfer an option for Ontario deadstock collection?

Lilian Schaer
Livestock Research Innovation Corporation

A follow up study into possible solutions for the Ontario livestock industry's deadstock management challenges has identified developing additional holding or transfer capacity as a way to reduce costs for both farmers and collectors.

This is one of five recommendations in a new report recently completed for Livestock Research Innovation Corporation (LRIC) by MacTavish Consulting. LRIC has been leading efforts by the livestock sector to find workable solutions for managing on-farm livestock mortalities.

As a large province with regionally diverse livestock production, there is no one solution that will work for all Ontario livestock commodities in all geographies. The environment is a challenging one for producers with some having to wait days for pick up depending on demand and/or collector availability. Collection costs are increasing, and the provincial collector licensing system has left some regions underserved while others have more collectors than needed.

Collectors, composters and renderers, in turn, are also dealing with rising costs, a complicated regulatory system and the realities of keeping their businesses economically viable.

The need for solutions led to a report completed last year by the same consultancy on the status of deadstock management in Ontario. That study was funded by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) in response to a request from Beef Farmers of Ontario, Dairy Farmers of Ontario, Ontario Sheep Farmers, Veal Farmers of Ontario, and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

This initial report spawned a series of meetings hosted by LRIC that involved government, regulatory authorities, farmers and deadstock industry representatives including renderers, composters and deadstock collectors.

Investigating collaboration around centralized transfer stations

The sessions resulted in an agreement to focus on centralized transfer stations to provide collection points for deadstock drop off and pick up by the existing network of licensed collectors and disposal facilities. Multiple local collectors could use these central transfer stations, lowering pick up costs for producers and providing much-needed volume for collectors.

Existing landfill facilities made it clear they are not interested in becoming part of the deadstock collection system, and the regulatory environment for establishing and maintaining these stations is complex, involving multiple agencies and pieces of legislation.

"Early in this project, it became evident from speaking directly with collectors and industry stakeholders that collectors are already using some form of transfer stations," says study lead Jennifer MacTavish. "This is either by providing farmers with on-farm storage options or partnering with other collectors to store carcasses to make transport more economical."

One example is an on-farm refrigerated container that is only picked up when full, decreasing collection costs per carcass. Another option is a collector-owned central station where they bring and store carcasses until they have sufficient volume to be able to economically deliver them to the final destination.

"We learned quickly that collectors are already individually taking leadership around the issue of transfer stations," notes MacTavish, adding that while some are willing to work collaboratively across the sector, others have no desire or intent to do so.

"Ultimately, although this project has successfully brought them all to the table, it's economics that will dictate if and where they locate transfer stations and where they choose to offer pick up – and there is little the industry can do to influence those economic realities," she says.

According to MacTavish, this resulted in the report shifting to include data and information that could be useful to those looking to establish or expand central collection options, as well as development of a new set of recommendations.

Funding for additional holding or transfer capacity

Current and future deadstock funding programs for industry or farmers should include eligibility for the capital, labour and planning costs needed to establish additional on-farm or centralized holding/transfer capacity for carcasses. For example, this means ensuring cost-share percentages are high enough to support the purchase of cold storage units for central locations.

Ensuring consistency in understanding and enforcement of regulations

There is a need to work with regulatory agencies to ensure there is clear understanding of applicable regulations and how they are enforced. While the full-time collectors interviewed for the study have no issues with the need to be regulated, there is a perception that regulators do not seem to communicate with one another. As well, there is frustration around inconsistencies between inspectors in terms of how regulations are interpreted and enforced.

The regulatory framework governing collection and disposal of deadstock is complex, involving both provincial agencies as well as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency if Specified Risk Material (SRM) is at play – parts of cattle that could potentially contain the agent that causes Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE).

Reviewing the provincial licensing system

Interviewed collectors indicated there should be a review of the current suite of licensed collectors who are active as well as exercise some kind of audit or review of licenses with no activity. This would ensure all licensed collectors are active and compliant with the regulations and those who aren't can either be brought into compliance or have their licenses withdrawn.

Producer incentive program for deadstock services

Government and provincial livestock producer organizations are encouraged to considering developing a pay-back or incentive program for farmers who use licensed deadstock collection to help support the economic viability of this service that is very much needed by farmers. Beef Farmers of Ontario delegates passed a resolution in support of this concept at the organization's February 2024 annual general meeting.

Continued industry communications

It is recommended that livestock commodity organizations or representatives organize at a minimum, a yearly meeting with the deadstock industry.

There is continued recognition that there are no easy answers or one-stop-shop solutions to the deadstock challenge that will work equally well for all producers and all livestock commodities in Ontario. However, there is benefit to producers, deadstock service providers and government maintaining open lines of communications to boost continued understanding of the issues and challenges each stakeholder faces. ■

Funding for the report was provided to LRIC by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. For more information or a copy of the report, please contact Kelly Somerville at ksomerville@livestockresearch.ca.

Let's review your backup power plan: The necessity of preparedness

Bruce Kelly, Program Manager

Farm & Food Care Ontario



Standby unit on a dairy farm from Sommers Generators
Photo credit: Bruce Kelly



GenerLink transfer switch
Photo credit: Bruce Kelly

The need for a backup power solution for farms and rural properties has become increasingly crucial. Electricity is essential for powering homes, farms, and communication devices, making a backup plan not just convenient but necessary, especially for livestock producers reliant on power for ventilation and well pumps.

While Ontario's hydro grid is generally dependable, it cannot guarantee uninterrupted power during seasonal storms. For instance, a Derecho wind event in May 2022 left hundreds of thousands without power for days, forcing many farms to rely on backup systems for over a week. Developing your backup power strategy today is to stay well ahead of catastrophic events.

Types of generators

There are three main types of generators:

- 1. Portable generators:** Affordable and versatile, these can be shared among users but require safe connections to home systems.
- 2. Power-take-off (PTO) generators:** These tractor-powered units can provide significant power, ideal for larger farms, however power supply can fluctuate.
- 3. Permanent standby generators:** These are the most reliable, offering automatic power restoration for critical systems.

There are several ways to configure these systems to power some or all of your equipment during an outage. Installing an approved transfer switch is essential and ensures you will not endanger utility workers or damage equipment when power is restored. This can be manual or automatic, and integrating smaller battery backups and surge protectors for sensitive devices like computers is also wise.

Essential systems to keep running

Identify which systems must remain operational during an outage. Consider mandatory needs like:

- Lighting
- Ventilation
- Water and sewage pumps
- Feeding equipment

Also, think about nice-to-have systems (e.g., hot water, house lights) and what can be forgone. Ensuring power for essential systems like sump pumps is crucial to avoid costly damage.

For livestock operations, a large permanent diesel generator with an automatic transfer switch is typically the best option. However, smaller farms might find alternative solutions more suitable.

Choosing the right generator

Portable generators: While portable generators (8,000 to 10,000 watts) are cost-effective for rural homeowners, safe and compliant connections to the electrical system are critical. A new device called a *GenerLink* allows for a code-compliant connection between portable generators and your electrical system. Installed at your power meter base, it enables seamless power transfer during outages. Users must manage the load effectively, prioritizing essential appliances to avoid overloading the generator. Never run a portable generator in an enclosed building or where exhaust may enter a living space. Portable generators must be shut down every few hours for inspection and refueling.

PTO generators: These can deliver significant power (10,000 to 150,000 watts) and are portable, making them a practical choice for farmers. They offer a cost-efficient way to access more power and run entire farms, including feed milling equipment and silo unloaders. However, they require a manual transfer switch and someone capable of

safely operating the generator and the tractor. Be aware that power quality can fluctuate, which may damage sensitive electronic equipment.

Permanent standby generators: These systems (10,000 to 80,000+ watts) are among the most reliable for rural properties and livestock farms. Generators are powered by diesel, natural gas (NG), or liquid propane (LP) fueled engines and typically come equipped with an automatic transfer switch. This switch continuously monitors incoming power from the grid, allowing the generator to start in less than a minute if the power supply fails. With adequate fuel, these systems can operate for extended periods. Installation requires a sturdy mounting base or a small shelter to house the generator and regular maintenance is essential to ensure reliability.

Planning your backup power system

Consult a generator service representative to help design a system tailored to your specific needs, protection level, and budget. Factors like sizing, fuel source, and the layout of your electrical system will dictate the optimal placement for your generator and transfer switch.

Electricity is often taken for granted – until an outage occurs. For veal producers and other farmers, having a backup power plan is critical to prevent significant economic losses. A reliable generator is not just an addition to your electrical system; it is a vital component of your farm's emergency strategy. Being prepared today can save you from disruptions tomorrow. ■

References available upon request.



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The Skinny on Fat

Providing milk replacer made with a high-quality fat is crucial for calves to maximize the highly efficient growth period of the milk-fed stage

In early life, calves receive the majority of their energy from lactose (milk sugar) and highly digestible fat. Most fat filled powders manufactured in North America are widely based on animal fat. However, young calves also require medium chain fatty acids sourced from plants to be able to digest and utilize fat efficiently. So, in 2015 Grober decided to invest in creating an easily digestible fat source specific for use in milk replacers. The edible grade production facility began production in Auburn, NY in 2016.

What makes Grober fat different?

The Grober Nutrition developed fat is a Protein Encapsulated Fat (PEF). It contains easily digestible medium and long-chain fatty acids by using a combination of coconut oil and lard to mimic milk fat. Medium and long-chain fatty acids both play important roles in creating a highly nutritious and digestible product for calves. Grober Nutrition branded products also contain Gro Mega in the fat, a proprietary encapsulated form of tributyrate. Tributyrate is a source of short chain fatty acids, and when used in milk replacer, it allows the fatty acid profile to most closely resemble the fatty acid profile of whole milk.

Fatty acid profile of Protein Encapsulated Fat

Short chain fatty acids (Gro Mega)

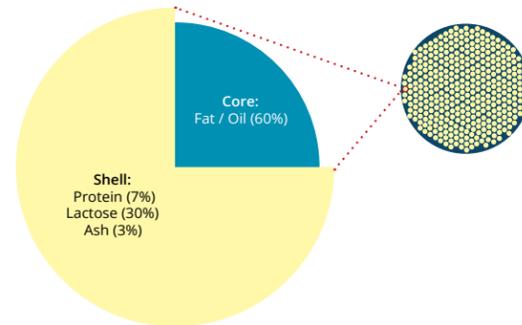
- Helps with gastrointestinal development
- Increases feed efficiency

Medium chain fatty acids (coconut oil)

- Sensitive to salivary and gastric enzymes that are intact right from birth
- Protective effect against gram+ bacteria (i.e. Clostridium perfringens)

Long chain fatty acids (lard & canola)

- Major energy source and provides $\Omega 3$ and $\Omega 6$ essential fatty acids
- Play an important role in anti-inflammatory responses



Another important characteristic of a high-quality dry fat is mixability. The challenge when creating a dry fat is that fat and oil don't mix with water and are therefore not stable in solution. The Grober solution? PEF is a fat droplet wearing a "jacket" of protein, and makes a stable solution.

To produce PEF, Grober uses a system of emulsification and homogenization. This creates an encapsulated fat and oil core, with a protein and lactose shell. The quality of fat and oil matters as well, with only human-grade sources being utilized in the manufacturing of our PEF. This creates a highly palatable powder that remains stable over time in the milk replacer.

Grober's Protein Encapsulated Fat results in an end milk replacer product that is easily mixed by you, and easily digested by the calf. Grober milk replacers are made with digestibility in mind to ensure calves receive all the nutrients they need to grow and thrive.



GroberNutrition.com | 519-622-2500 | X IG FB



Five-year Ontario Veal market calendar

Veal is often consumed during the celebration of various holidays, recognized by numerous ethnic groups worldwide, and those who now call Canada home. This resource was designed to help you, the producer, plan production to meet the demands of the flourishing ethnic market for veal in Ontario.

Note: Dates may vary based on religious calendar observed. Also note that some holidays are observed over several days. Consult with your buyer to ensure accuracy. ■

	Holidays	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Christian	Epiphany	Monday, Jan. 6	Tuesday, Jan. 6	Wednesday, Jan. 6	Thursday, Jan. 6	Saturday, Jan. 6
	Eastern Orthodox Christmas	Tuesday, Jan. 7	Wednesday, Jan. 7	Thursday, Jan. 7	Friday, Jan. 7	Sunday, Jan. 7
	Western Roman Easter	Sunday, April 20	Sunday, April 5	Sunday, March 28	Sunday, April 16	Sunday, April 1
	Eastern Orthodox Easter	Sunday, April 20	Sunday, April 12	Sunday, May 2	Sunday, April 16	Sunday, April 8
	Christmas	Thursday, Dec. 25	Friday, Dec. 25	Saturday, Dec. 25	Monday, Dec. 25	Tuesday, Dec. 25
Jewish	Passover/Pesach	April 12 to April 20	April 1 to April 9	April 21 to April 29	April 10 to April 18	March 30 to April 7
	Rosh Hashanah	Sept. 22 to Sept. 24	Sept. 11 to Sept. 13	Oct. 1 to Oct. 3	Sept. 20 to Sept. 22	Sept. 9 to Sept. 11
	Hanukkah	Dec. 14 to Jan. 2	Dec. 4 to Dec. 12	Dec. 24 to Jan. 1	Dec. 12 to Dec. 20	Dec. 1 to Dec. 9
Islamic	Ramadan (start)	Saturday, March 1	Wednesday, Feb. 18	Monday, Feb. 8	Friday, Jan. 28	Monday, Jan. 15
	Eid ul-Fitr	Monday, March 31	Friday, March 20	Wednesday, March 10	Sunday, February 27	Wednesday, Feb. 14
	Eid ul-Adha	Friday, June 6	Wednesday, May 27	Sunday, May 16	Friday, May 5	Monday, April 23
	Muharram	Friday, June 27	Wednesday, June 17	Sunday, June 6	Thursday, May 25	Monday, May 14
	Mawlid al-Nabi	Friday, Sept. 5	Wednesday, Aug. 26	Sunday, Aug. 15	Thursday, Aug. 3	Monday, July 23
Hindu	Navratri Festival	Monday, Sept. 22	Sunday, Oct. 11	Thursday, Sept. 30	Tuesday, Sept. 19	Monday, Oct. 8
	Diwali	Tuesday, Oct. 21	Sunday, Nov. 8	Friday, Oct. 29	Tuesday, Oct. 17	Monday, Nov. 5
Other holidays to consider	Chinese New Year	Wednesday, Jan. 29	Tuesday, Feb. 17	Saturday, Feb. 6	Wednesday, Jan. 26	Tuesday, Feb. 13
	Cinco de Mayo	Monday, May 5	Tuesday, May 5	Wednesday, May 5	Friday, May 5	Saturday, May 5
	Canada Day	Tuesday, July 1	Wednesday, July 1	Thursday, July 1	Saturday, July 1	Sunday, July 1
	Independence Day (USA)	Friday, July 4	Saturday, July 4	Sunday, July 4	Tuesday, July 4	Wednesday, July 4
	Independence Day (Jamaica)	Wednesday, Aug. 6	Thursday, Aug. 6	Friday, Aug. 6	Sunday, Aug. 6	Monday, Aug. 6
	Thanksgiving (Canada)	Monday, Oct. 13	Monday, Oct. 12	Monday, Oct. 11	Monday, Oct. 9	Monday, Oct. 8



Veal Trade Tracker

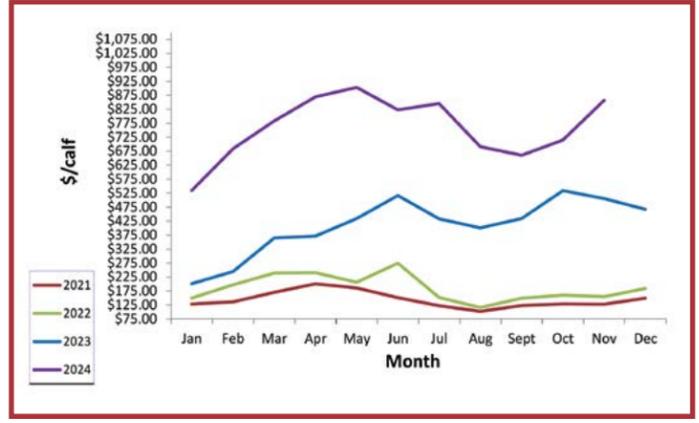
30-Sep-24

A quarterly snapshot of Canada's veal trade

VEAL MARKET INFORMATION

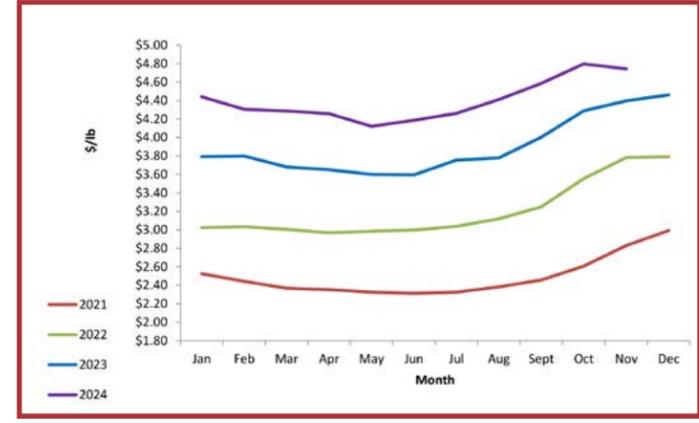
This information is collected from various sources and disseminated by Veal Farmers of Ontario.

Bob Calf Pricing



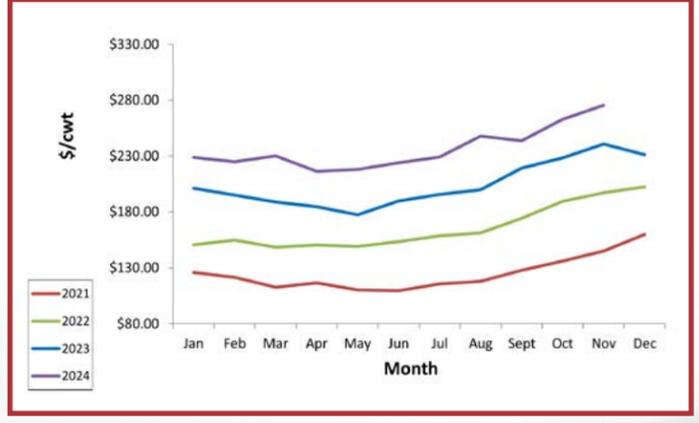
This price range is collected and tabulated from participating sale barns throughout Ontario based on average pricing. This information is used to follow trends.

Rail Grade Veal Pricing



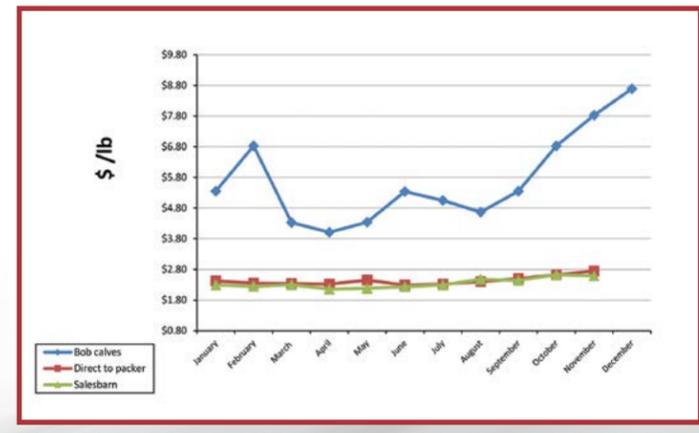
This information is collected from producer contributions on a weekly basis. Once the numbers are collected a weighted average is calculated. The weighted average gives a more realistic price of what is happening in the market. This information is used to follow trends.

Sale Barn Veal Pricing

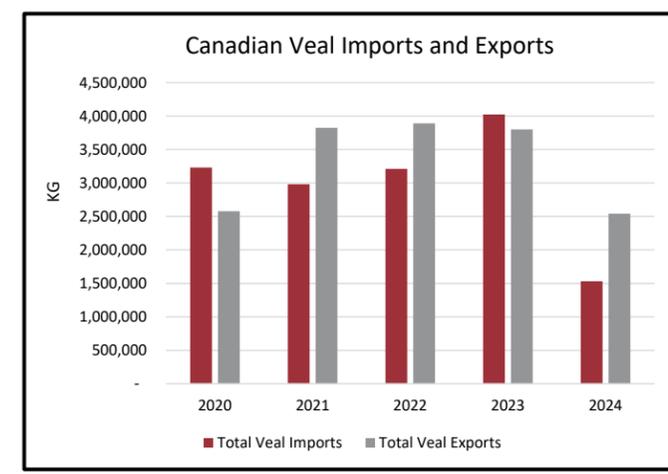


This price range is collected and tabulated from participating sale barns throughout Ontario based on average pricing. This information is used to follow trends.

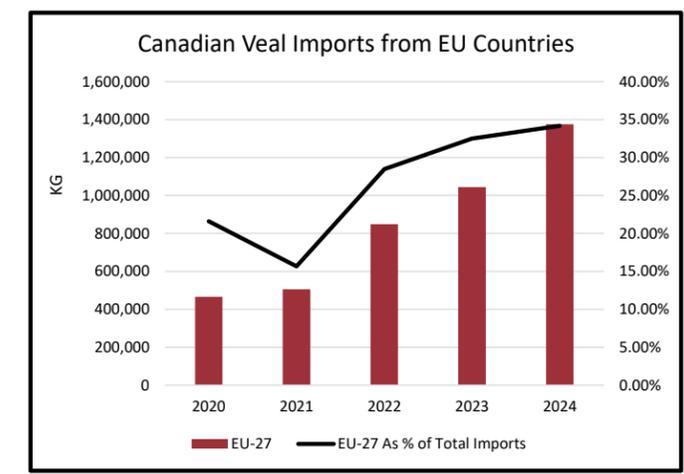
Finished price compared to bob calf prices (8 months previous)



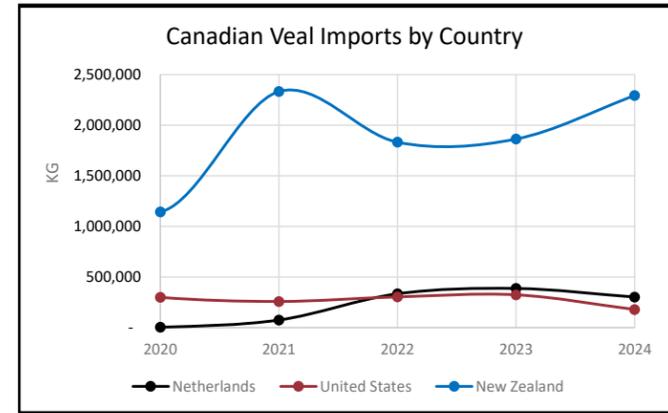
This graph is used to compare the finished price from both the sale barn and rail grade pricing to the bob calf prices eight months prior. This information could help when deciding on the purchase prices of calves and what market they will be shipped in. This information gives a quick glance at both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



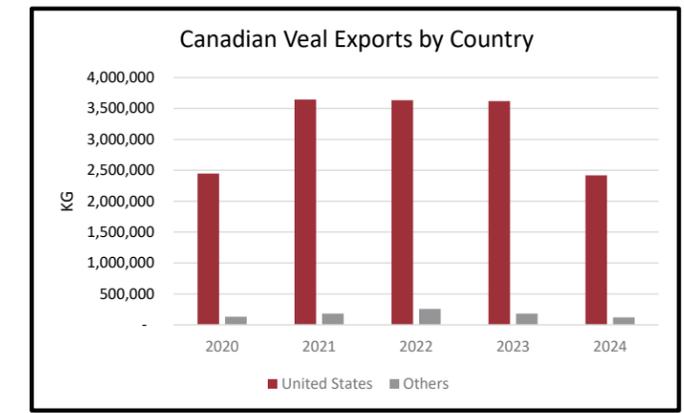
Through September 2024, veal exports continue to exceed imports. Year to date imports (by volume) have fallen 30% compared with 2023. Exports remain slightly below 2023 levels.



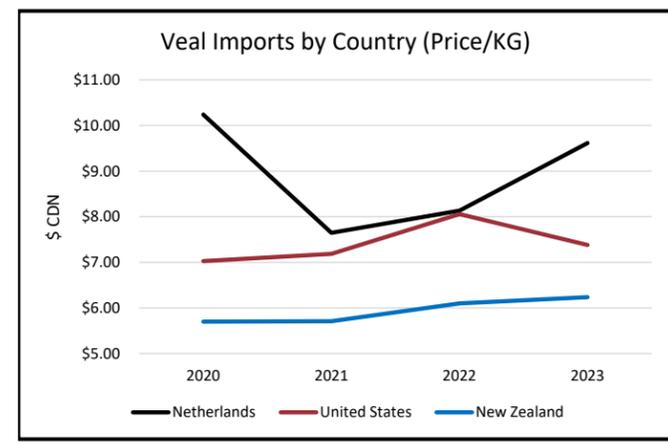
The volume of veal imports from the EU represents 32% of Canada's total veal imports (black line). In addition to the Netherlands, Italy is also a predominant source of European imports.



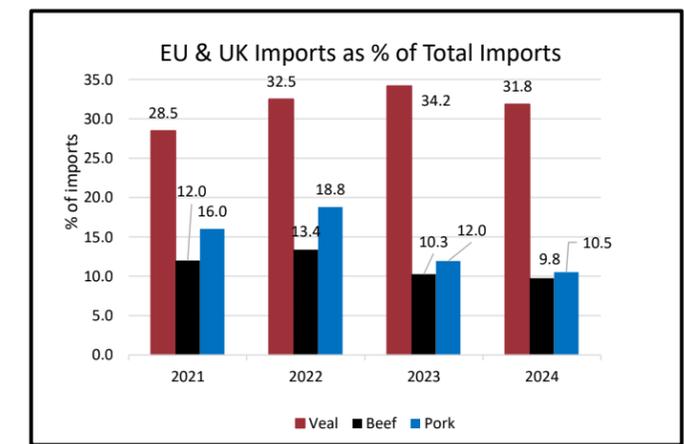
Import volumes from the United States are consistent with 2023 levels. Imports from the Netherlands have decreased by half compared to this time in 2023. New Zealand's share of Canada's veal imports continues to grow.



Veal exports to the United States have declined 10% year to date compared to 2023. The balance of Canada's veal exports, which are sent to the Middle East remain steady.



The per kilogram price of veal imported from the Netherlands remains higher than other countries. The value of American cuts fell in 2023, while the value of New Zealand imports held steady.



When compared to other red meat categories, the share of veal being imported into Canada from the EU and UK is consistently two to three times higher.

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

FEATURED VEAL RECIPE

Ontario VEAL appeal

Veal Croquettes

Cut: Cubed/Stewing | Servings: Makes about 24 croquettes |
Prep Time: 20 minutes | Cook Time: 2 hours 15 minutes plus 3 hours chill time

Hearty yet delicate this veal filled croquette has a warm spice from the inside and out. Make these as a family get together project that everyone will be happy to enjoy together.



Ingredients:

1 1/2 lb (750 g) Ontario stewing veal cubes
1 onion, quartered
1 each celery rib and carrot, coarsely chopped
2 bay leaves
1/2 tsp (1 mL) each whole peppercorns and whole cloves
1/4 cup (60 mL) butter
1 shallot, minced
1/2 cup (125 mL) all-purpose flour
1/4 cup (60 mL) chopped fresh parsley
1/2 tsp (2 mL) each salt and pepper
1/4 tsp (1 mL) cayenne
Pinch fresh nutmeg (optional)

Instructions:

In a large saucepan, combine veal, onion, celery, carrot, bay leaves, peppercorns and cloves. Pour in approximately 6 cups (1.5 L) of cold water to cover veal (add more water if necessary). Bring to a simmer, skimming off any foam as it appears. Simmer gently for about 2 hours or until veal is fork tender.

Strain veal and vegetables over a bowl through a sieve. Remove veal pieces to a separate bowl and shred the meat with two forks or if cool enough with your hands; let cool completely. Reserve 1 1/2 cups (375 mL) of the veal broth and discard vegetables or enjoy as a little snack while you make the croquettes.

In a saucepan, melt butter over medium heat and cook shallot for 2 minutes or until softened. Stir in flour and cook for 1 minute or until smooth. Whisk in reserved veal broth and cook, stirring for about 4 minutes or until bubbly and thickened. Remove from heat and stir in parsley, salt, pepper, cayenne and nutmeg, if using. Stir in shredded veal until well combined. Spread into a 13 x 9 inch (3 L) shallow dish; cover and refrigerate for about 2 hours or until cold and firm.

Coating: Meanwhile, place flour in a plate. In a shallow bowl, beat

Coating:

1/2 cup (125 mL) all-purpose flour
2 large eggs
3 tbsp (45 mL) water
1 1/4 cups (310 mL) dry breadcrumbs
1/2 tsp (2 mL) each salt and pepper
1/4 tsp (1 mL) cayenne

Canola oil for frying

eggs and water together. In a third dish, combine breadcrumbs, salt, pepper and cayenne. Using about 2 tbsp (30 mL) of the veal mixture at a time, shape into about 24 log pieces about 3 x 1 inch (7.5 x 2.5 cm). Place them on a parchment paper lined baking sheet. Refrigerate for about 1 hour to firm mixture back up, if necessary. Roll into flour. Then dip into egg mixture and let excess drip off. Coat with breadcrumb mixture and place onto a parchment paper lined baking sheet. Repeat with remaining ingredients.

Heat oil to 325°F (160°C) in a deep fryer or deep heavy saucepan. Fry a few croquettes at a time for about 2 minutes or until golden brown. Remove to a paper towel lined baking sheet and repeat with remaining croquettes. Enjoy right away, refrigerate for up to 3 days or simply let cool completely and freeze on baking sheet until solid. Remove and place into an airtight container or sealable plastic bag and freeze for up to 1 month.

Tip: To reheat croquettes from refrigerator, place on parchment paper lined baking sheet into 350°F (180°C) oven for about 10 minutes or until heated through. To reheat croquettes from frozen, let thaw in refrigerator overnight and then add about 3 minutes to reheat instructions from refrigerator. ■



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Licensed dealers

As a veal (bob calves, started/preconditioned calves, and finished veal cattle) producer, you should be dealing with licensed dealers who are remitting veal licence fees/check-off on behalf of the farmers they are collecting from. If you are selling bob calves from your dairy farm, the 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 licensed, ask to see the licence, check the Agricorn website at <https://agricorp.com> 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://agricorp.com> or call 1-888-247-4999 for more information. ■

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & PRODUCER EDUCATION DAY

Wednesday, March 5, 2025

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