

Introduction

The goal of a grain-fed veal farmer is to achieve the desired finish on veal cattle at the right weight and age. Ideally, market-ready grain-fed veal cattle should weigh between 295 to 320 kg (650 to 705 lb.) at 28 to 32 weeks (seven to eight months) of age. To achieve this goal, it is critical to have the right feed rations and ratios.

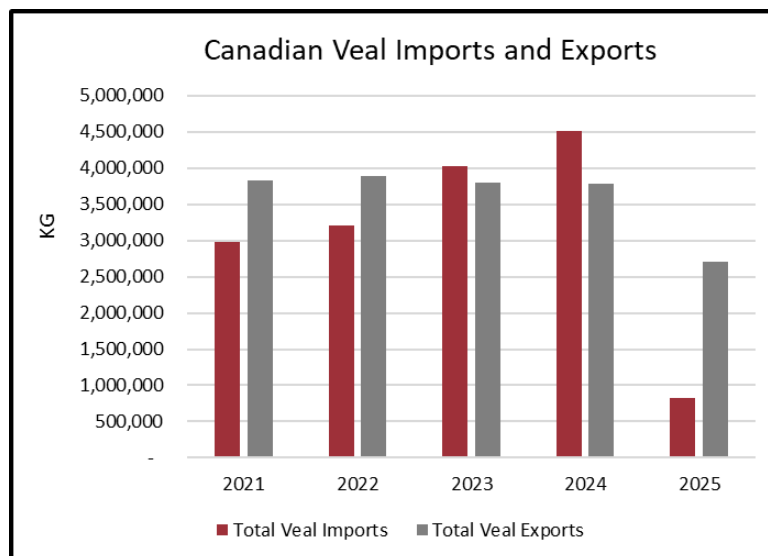
Veal is defined as cattle of any dairy breed or dairy crossbreed dressing no more than 190 kg (419 lb.). This converts to a live weight of roughly 349 kg (769 lb.), which is reached at approximately eight months of age. Producers are strongly encouraged to target a dress weight of 180 kg (397 lb.) to maintain some flexibility within the system to manage veal carcass weights.

- Average daily gain (ADG) should be 1.2 kg (2.6 lb.) or better. Targeting daily gains above 1.5 kg (3.3 lb.) may require additional nutrient requirements.

Grain-fed veal cattle are fed a balanced ration based of grain (usually clean, whole-shelled corn) and pellets made of protein, vitamins, and minerals. A small amount of fibre should be offered daily to maintain rumen health. Cattle should also have continuous access to their feed, to encourage slower eating and stimulate chewing. Ensure there is adequate bunk space for each animal.

Imports

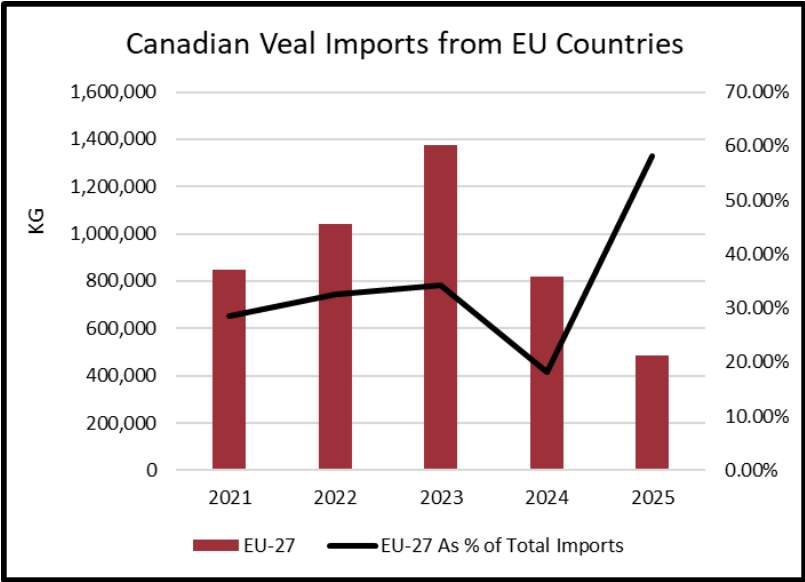
Among the strategic objectives of Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) are to “advocate for veal on government policies that impact producers” and “increase consumption and drive demand for Ontario veal”. Understanding trade markets, especially imports, represents an opportunity for veal producers. Every pound of imported veal consumed by Canadians means one less pound that needs to be produced here in Canada. Ontario veal producers are competing in a global marketplace. The average Canadian consumes 0.82 kg (1.8 lb.) of veal per year and in collaboration with the Canadian Veal Association (CVA), VFO is working towards ensuring all that veal is Canadian.



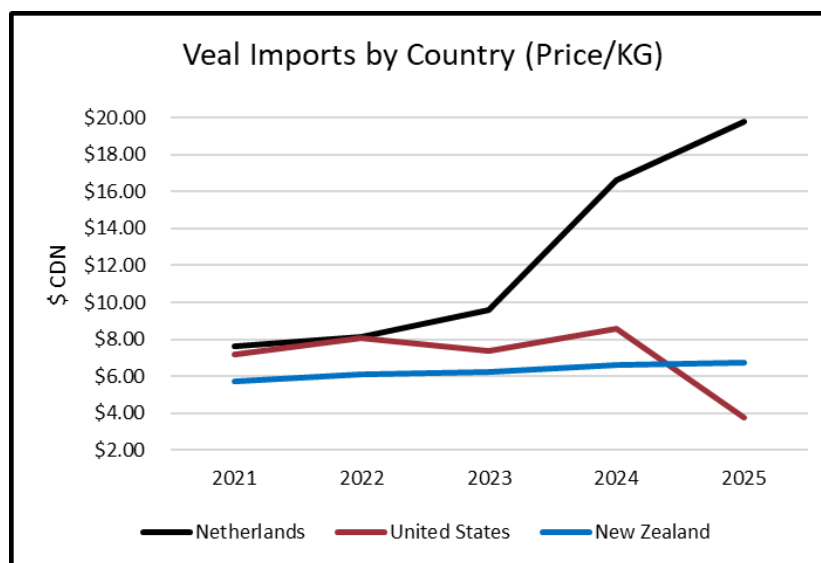
Rise of EU imports

In 2024, exports of Canadian veal totaled just under 3.8 million kg (8.4 million lb.) and were valued at \$45.7 million CDN. During 2024, approximately 4.5 million kg (9.9 million lb.) of veal worth \$38 million dollars was imported into Canada. Veal is a specialty protein with a small market of Canadian’s overall meat consumption, as such even minor changes in trade volumes can cause large impacts across the industry.

One of the most notable changes in the veal marketplace is the ever-increasing volume of imports of veal from the European Union (EU). Prior to 2016 virtually no veal was imported in Canada from the EU. Since 2020, the Netherlands has been the second largest country of origin for veal imports into Canada, following New Zealand. Imports from other EU countries such as France and Italy have also increased significantly. Following a decline in 2024, veal imports from the EU in the first half of 2025 represent nearly 60 per cent of the total import volume.



This is concerning as EU imports command the highest price per kg. Since 2023, veal imported from the Netherlands has been consistently valued well above imports from other countries. In 2024 and the first of 2025, veal imported from the EU was worth nearly double the per kg price than imports from the United States and New Zealand. Unfortunately, Agriculture and Agri Food Canada (AAFC) does not report on which cuts are being imported. However, anecdotally VFO is aware that these are higher quality cuts (cutlets, scaloppini) that compete directly with Ontario veal. However, while EU imports are rising, because of non-tariff trade barriers imposed by the EU, exports of Canadian veal (and all Canadian red meat) to the EU remain at near zero levels.



With Canadian veal cattle currently being in short supply, veal processors are required to import veal to meet demand. Maintaining a consistent supply of veal cattle is critical to the success and growth of the Canadian veal industry. Producers can take advantage of strong market prices to further invest in their operations. These investments can help ensure a consistent supply of veal cattle to processors, build a stronger local veal industry, and reduce Canada's reliance on international imports. Throughout the trade and market uncertainty VFO continues to be a strong advocate for producers, working with our industry and government partners to build a strong, innovative, and resilient veal sector.

Have any questions about veal trade markets or ideas to foster innovation? Send an email to Patrick at pmacCarthy@vealfarmers.ca or call the VFO office at 519-824-2942.

Data is retrieved from the Agricultural Industry Market Information System (AIMIS) of Statistics Canada. All data is as of June 2025.

For more information:

Learn more about feeding veal cattle here:

- Grain-fed veal fact sheet - Feeding for finish
<https://vealfarmers.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/VFO-Grain-Fed-Factsheet-feeding-for-finish-FINAL-2020.05.06.pdf>
- Grain-fed veal fact sheet - Feed ratios
<https://vealfarmers.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/VFO-Grain-Fed-Factsheet-feed-ratios-FINAL-2022.06.21.pdf>

As part of your research into starting a grain-fed veal farm, you are encouraged to talk to experienced veal producers, visit their farms (while following strict biosecurity protocols), and attend industry events and meetings. No two veal farms are the same and a lot of valuable information will be learned from each visit and event.

Find VFO producer resources here: <https://vealfarmers.ca/producer-information/resources/>

Find the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Veal Cattle* here: <https://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/veal-cattle>

Find Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Agribusiness veal resources here: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/veal-farming>

References available upon request.

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Find us online:

<https://vealfarmers.ca>

<https://calfcare.ca>

Find us on social:

X: [@OntarioVeal](#)

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[@Finishing grain-fed veal in Ontario](#)

[@Marketing of male dairy calves in Ontario](#)

YouTube: [Ontario Veal](#)

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