



Facts & Figures About Canadian *Veal*

In General:

- Veal is raised by farm families who take care of their veal 365 days a year.
- Milk-fed veal calves are raised to approximately 205 to 227kg (450 to 500 lbs), which is achieved at approximately five months of age.
- Grain-fed veal calves are raised to approximately 295 to 318 kg (650 to 700 lbs), achieved at approximately seven months of age.
- Ontario produces approximately 70,000 veal calves per year.
- Quebec produces approximately 220,000 veal calves per year.
- Ontario and Quebec have the highest veal production because of their large number of dairy farms in comparison to other provinces.
- Veal is one of the oldest of all food animals when it goes to market, second to beef cattle.
- More than 95 per cent of all veal calves in Canada are from the Holstein breed. Holsteins grow quickly, are naturally well muscled and very lean.
- Veal farmers work closely with veterinarians to help keep their calves healthy.
- Grain-fed veal is unique to Canada.
- Most veal calves are raised on farms that specialize in veal production, and the rest are raised on dairy farms.



You were asking about...Veal

Housing: Where Do Veal Live?

There are many different management systems for raising veal. Some veal farmers raise a few of their own dairy calves for local consumption and some produce commercial quantities of veal for provincial and export markets. Each farmer has their own housing preferences according to their facilities, the size of their operation and their marketing goals.

In general, veal is raised in groups with a very small percentage being raised in individual housing. Veal may be fed either milk or grain to achieve market weight. Canadian veal calves are raised indoors in barns that protect the calves from harsh weather, predators and parasites. The barns are well lit, temperature-controlled, use natural or artificial lighting, and are well-ventilated to provide clean, fresh air on a continuous basis.

For the first six to eight weeks of their lives, until they are old enough to be weaned, many veal calves are kept in individual pens known as hutches. After weaning, the calves will be raised to market weight in one of two different management systems: either as milk-fed or grain-fed veal, at which time they may change their housing system.

The majority of Ontario veal is raised as grain-fed veal with only a small percentage being raised as milk-fed veal. This is the opposite of Quebec, where the majority of veal raised is milk-fed veal.

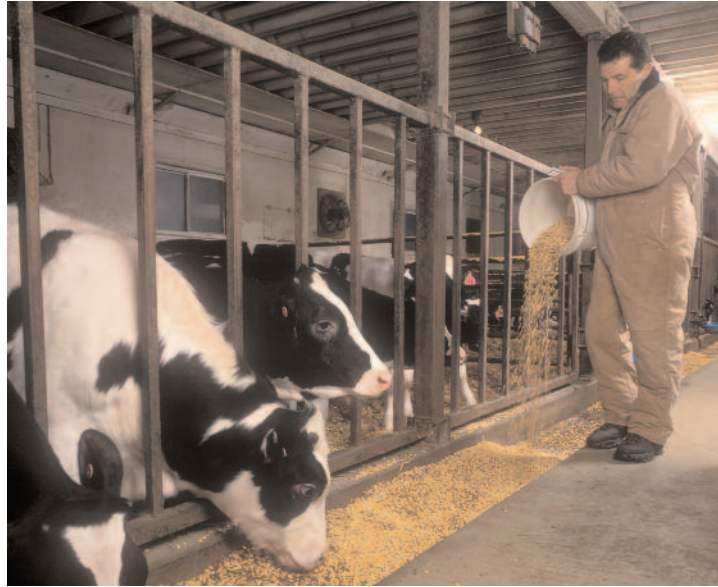
Housing methods have no effect on the tenderness or colour of veal, nor does the amount of exercise a calf receives affect the meat characteristics. Meat quality and colour are a result of diet.

Nutrition: What Do Veal Eat?

Some calves will stay on a milk diet and others will be weaned off milk and switched to a grain diet once they are about eight weeks old. Calves that stay on a milk diet are called milk-fed veal. The other calves are called grain-fed veal and will eat corn mixed with vitamins and minerals. A 600 lb veal calf will eat 15 lbs of grain and drink up to 30 litres of water a day. That is the same as 14 boxes of cereal and 15 two-litre cartons of milk!

Milk-fed veal calves are raised in barns in individual stalls or in group pens together with other calves. Barns are well lit during the day and dark at night, and are built to keep calves cool in summer and warm in the winter. They also have slatted floors — manure and urine falls through this type of floor to keep calves clean and dry. Farmers watch the animals carefully so that if any become sick, they can take care of them right away.

Grain-fed veal calves are raised first in hutches or individual stalls and then groups. At six to eight weeks of age, they are moved into barns where they live in group pens together with other calves of the same size. This is to keep bigger calves from bullying smaller ones, and make sure they all have equal access to feed. Farmers make sure the animals



have plenty of feed and water, and clean bedding of straw or wood shavings.

Veal calves are fed balanced diets with added iron, vitamins and minerals. Calves are brought to market weight either entirely on a milk-based diet, or on a milk-based diet followed by a grain-based diet.

Milk-based diets are balanced rations that involve commercial milk replacers, which utilize surplus skim milk powder and whey, both byproducts of the dairy industry. These commercial milk replacers are of equal or greater nutritional value than milk straight from the dairy cow.

Canadian veal is produced in accordance with best practice standards set out by the industry, Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Canadian consumers can be sure that

Canadian veal is raised following production and safety standards that are among the most stringent in the world.

Canadian farmers follow the Recommended Codes of Practice for the Care and Handling of Veal Calves. In Ontario, there is also the Ontario Veal Quality Assurance Program. These resources ensure that veal calves are raised in an environment where their welfare is top priority.

About the Life Cycle of Veal...

Dairy cows give birth to a calf each year as part of their production cycle that provides us with milk and other dairy products. Approximately half of all calves born are male (bull) calves, and only a small percentage of these are kept for breeding purposes. The rest of the males are used for the production of veal.

Commercial veal farmers most commonly purchase calves directly from local dairy farms or at auction markets when calves are 7-10 days old, weighing approximately 50 kg (100 lbs).

The market weight of the calves from milk-fed or grain-fed veal farms is dictated by market demands. Milk-fed veal is raised to approximately 200 to 225kg (400 to 500 lbs), which is achieved at approximately five months of age.

These animals supply us with milk-fed and grain-fed veal at your local retailer. Milk-fed veal is light pink in colour, and very tender with a subtle taste. Grain-fed veal, by comparison, is a bit darker pink, also very tender but with a mild beef flavour. Grain-fed veal is raised to approximately 295 to 318 kg (650 to 700 lbs), achieved around seven months of age.

Breeds

Most of the calves being commercially raised for veal are dairy breeds; Holstein or Holstein-cross bull calves. Holstein is the predominant breed used for dairy production in Canada.

For more information on cattle breeds, visit www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds

Off to Market

Veal calves are transported to meat processing plants on special trucks designed for them. There are government guidelines for transporting veal calves that farmers, truck drivers and individuals working at processing plants must follow. This includes how to handle the veal calves properly, and how many animals can be put on a truck to make sure they are comfortable and calm. Processing plants follow strict government rules on humane handling and processing animals and meat products. A government inspector at the plant inspects each animal. This is to ensure that only healthy animals enter the food chain and that meat is safe to eat.



VEAL TRIVIA

- Veal consumption dates back to biblical times.
- At one time, when our surnames were directly related to our occupation, “veal” was considered the last name of someone who tended calf herds. This was derived from the Middle English and Old French word “veel” meaning “calf”. In turn, this was derived from the Latin word “vitellus” or “vitulus” also meaning “calf”.
- Veel formed the basis of the word “velin” or “calf skin for writing on”. In the 15th century, the English adapted the word to “vellum”, which we still use today to mean a special kind of see-through paper.

Veal Dictionary

Here are a few terms you need to know to get around a barn:

- **Veal:** A type of meat produced from male (bulls) dairy animals (Holstein)
- **Bovine:** An animal of the cattle group
- **Calf:** A young bovine
- **Cow:** A fertile female bovine
- **Bull:** A fertile male bovine
- **Heifer:** A female bovine that has not yet had a calf
- **Holstein:** The black and white breed of dairy cows, most often seen on dairy farms in Canada. Most veal animals are Holstein or Holstein-cross bull calves
- **Bob calf:** A male calf weighing approximately 100 lbs that will be entered into veal production
- **Hutches:** A small house where calves live for the first few weeks of life
- **Milk replacer:** A liquid milk-based diet similar to infant formula
- **Ruminant:** A ruminant is any hooved animal that has four stomachs.
- **Weaning:** Switching a calf’s food source from milk to solid feed
- **Grain-fed veal:** Veal calves that eat grain once they are weaned
- **Milk-fed veal:** Veal calves that are only fed milk
- **Veal farmer:** A person who raises veal calves

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Veal - The Product

Low in saturated fat and high in iron, zinc and B12, Canadian veal is a delicious, lean and nutrient-packed protein that is an ideal complement to a healthy lifestyle.

Canadian veal is a great source of the vitamins and minerals we need to stay active, fit and healthy.

- Iron supports metabolism and plays an important role in physical and mental performance.
- Vitamin B12 is responsible for normal cell function and metabolism, including the synthesis of genetic material that is important to the brain and central nervous system.
- Zinc helps the body resist infections, is essential for normal growth and development, and potentially protects against bone loss in older adults.

Protein contains the essential amino acids needed for building muscle and assists in maintaining healthy organs and body tissue while boosting metabolism, slowing digestion and decreasing hunger. In addition, protein is essential to keep the body's hormones, enzymes and immune system functioning properly.

According to a nutrient analysis, veal exceeds other meat protein sources in terms of nutritional benefits. Veal is a lean, tender meat and a good source of protein.



About Veal - Who to Call

Veal Farmers of Ontario
Visit: www.ontarioveal.on.ca

Quebec Milk-Fed Veal
Visit www.milkfedveal.com

Quebec Certified Grain-fed Veal
Visit www.grainveal.com

Tour both grain fed and milk fed veal farm on line at
www.virtualfarmtours.ca

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Prepared by:



Farm & Food Care Ontario
www.farmfoodcare.org
519-837-1326
info@farmfoodcare.org