

# Feeding Calves for Veal

Prepared by H. P. Adams, Extension dairy specialist  
Oregon State University

Veal is produced in the United States primarily from surplus male calves of the larger dairy breeds.

Veal is usually defined as a calf raised entirely on milk or milk replacer until it attains a body weight of 250 to 350 pounds. Calves should gain weight rapidly so that a small layer of subcutaneous fat is produced, and the meat should be pink in color. Veal is highly desired, especially by those people whose origins are in southern Europe. It will bring a premium price in the summer because its low fat content makes it desirable in hot weather.

Veal production divides itself into two types of operations. In the first, only a few calves are raised on surplus milk. These calves usually are consumed by the producer's family or sold to neighbors. The second type of operation is commercial, where many calves are purchased and kept in individual pens in housing with a controlled environment.

These calves are usually fed, individually, specially formulated milk replacers; in some cases, they are marketed by the company that supplies the feed. This type of operation can make money for the operator, but it is not without risks. Because of small margins, the death of a few calves will consume the profit quickly. Give special attention to the following factors:

1. Calf selection from the larger dairy breeds is the usual practice. Avoid sick calves. These can often be picked out by sunken eyes or a rough hair coat, evidence of dehydration from diarrhea or scours. Take the temperature of every calf before purchasing it. Do not purchase any calves with temperatures either 1.0 degree above or below 101.5°F.

2. Thoroughly clean and disinfect facilities for each new calf. Clean, dry quarters with adequate ventilation are a must for veal calves. Cleanliness and sanitation will prevent a disease cycle between groups of calves.

3. Feed calves whole milk or a milk replacer formulated from dairy products and animal fats. Young calves do not efficiently digest products such as blood flour, fish flour, soybean meal, oat flour, and other animal and vegetable products. Most milk replacers for veal have a low level of antibiotic for growth stimulation. Several companies market a special milk replacer for veal production.

4. Watch health of calves closely. They must make rapid gains to be marketed as fancy veal; prevent sickness or even a few days off feed. Isolate calves that eat

slowly or do not clean up their feed, have scours and/or sunken eyes showing dehydration. Take their temperatures to determine whether such calves have an infectious disease; with the advice of a veterinarian, use the proper treatment to alleviate the problem. If you inject or feed antibiotics, be sure to observe the withdrawal period before marketing the calf. Dust or spray calves as necessary to control flies and other external parasites.

5. Marketing veal calves may be difficult in some areas. The demand is usually highest in and near large cities. Veal usually brings its highest price in summer.

Table 1 shows a feeding schedule for fancy veal. Recommendations may vary between companies sup-

Table 1. Feeding Schedule for Fancy Veal†

Days on feed	Pounds of milk or milk replacer/day
1- 4	4
5- 8	4.5
9-12	5
13-14	5.5
15-16	6
17-18	6.5
19-21	7
22-24	7.5
25-27	8
28-30	8.5
31-33	9
34-36	9.5
37-39	10
40-42	10.5
43-45	11
46-48	11.5
49-51	12
52-54	12.5
55-57	13
58-60	13.5
61-63	14
64-66	14.5
67-69	15
70-72	15.5
73-99	16

† This is a guide and will need adjusting for individual animals depending on body weight. If a milk replacer is used, follow directions for mixing and feeding.

plying the special milk replacers. It is important to watch the calves closely and reduce the feed if the calf does not eat it all. Individual feeding from a pail is recommended. Tables 2 and 3 are forms for recording income and expenses to analyze your business. Keeping records assures that the business is progressing in the direction you wish. Records will be useful in your business association with banks or others.

**Table 2. Individual Calf Record**

	Estimate	Your costs
Cost of calf .....	\$ 75.00	\$ _____
Cost of milk or milk replacer.....	95.00	\$ _____
Other costs:		
Reserve for losses and culls .....	10.00	\$ _____
Medication .....	4.00	\$ _____
Marketing/trucking .....	5.50	\$ _____
Utilities.....	5.00	\$ _____
Building (insurance, taxes) .....	7.00	\$ _____
Equipment .....	2.25	\$ _____
Interest .....	4.75	\$ _____
TOTAL	\$208.50	
Return for 330-pound veal calf		
@ 80¢/lb. ....	264.00	\$ _____
Estimated cost of 330-pound calf	208.50	\$ _____
	\$ 55.50	\$ _____

**Table 3. Production Report**

<b>PRODUCER</b> _____			
<b>ADDRESS</b> _____			
No. of calves started .....		Date started .....	
No. of calves sold .....		Date sold .....	
Avg. starting weight .....		Days fed .....	
Avg. weight gained .....		Avg. selling weight .....	
Lbs. of feed fed .....		Cost per lb. ....	
<b>INCOME</b>			
Calves sold .....	\$ _____		
Other income .....	\$ _____	Total income	\$ _____
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>			
Cost or value of calves .....	\$ _____		
Cost of feed .....	\$ _____		
Medicines and vet fees .....	\$ _____		
Marketing .....	\$ _____		
Labor .....	\$ _____		
Interest .....	\$ _____		
Utilities (heat, electricity, water) .....	\$ _____		
Building (insurance, taxes, interest, depreciation).....	\$ _____		
Equipment .....	\$ _____		
		Total expenses	\$ _____
		NET RETURN	\$ _____