

*Feeding*

# Calves for Veal



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# Feeding

## Calves for Veal

Veal is produced in the United States mainly from the calves of dairy cattle breeds. To be sold as veal, Oregon law specifies that a calf must be four or more weeks of age.

Whether it is profitable to feed calves for veal depends on these main considerations:

- Size of the calf at birth.
- Selling price of milk and butterfat.
- Market price of veal.
- Feeding and management practices.

### Size at Birth Important

The relationship between size of calf at birth and profit from vealing is easily understood when it is realized that, on the average, 10 pounds of whole milk, testing 4 percent butterfat, are required for 1 pound of gain. Usually the best market weight for veal calves is about 200 pounds. Smaller calves with the same condition sell for a lower price per pound. If the calf at birth weighs 90 pounds and 10 pounds of milk are required for each pound of gain, it would take 1,100 pounds of milk to grow the calf to 200 pounds. If the calf weighs only 60 pounds, 1,400 pounds of milk are required to grow it to 200 pounds. The difference in profit, due to the varying sizes of calves at birth and the resulting amounts of milk necessary, may determine whether or not one should attempt to produce veal. Differences in income over milk cost, due to variations in birth weight of calves, are illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1. Estimated income over milk cost from good veal with calves varying in birth weight and marketed at 200 pounds**

Birth weight of calves in pounds	Pounds milk required	Value of 4% milk at \$5.00 per 100 pounds*	Value of veal at 40¢ per pound	Income over milk cost
90	1,100	\$55.00	\$80.00	\$25.00
80	1,200	60.00	80.00	20.00
70	1,300	65.00	80.00	15.00
60	1,400	70.00	80.00	10.00
50	1,500	75.00	80.00	5.00

\* Approximate value of 4% factory and surplus milk.

**Table 2. Estimated income over milk cost with varying milk values**

Value of 4% milk per 100 pounds	Pounds milk required for vealing 70-pound calf to 200 pounds	Milk cost	Value of veal at 40¢ per pound	Income over milk cost
\$5.50	1,300	\$71.50	\$80.00	\$ 8.50
5.25	1,300	68.25	80.00	11.75
5.00	1,300	65.00	80.00	15.00
4.75	1,300	61.75	80.00	18.25
4.50	1,300	58.50	80.00	21.50

**Table 3. Estimated income over milk cost with varying veal prices**

Selling price of veal per 100 pounds*	Pounds milk required for vealing 70-pound calf to 200 pounds	Milk cost at \$5.00 per 100 pounds	Value of veal	Income over milk cost
\$45.00 Choice & Prime	1,300	\$65.00	\$90.00	\$25.00
35.00 Good	1,300	65.00	70.00	5.00
30.00 Standard	1,300	65.00	60.00	-5.00
25.00 Utility	1,300	65.00	50.00	-15.00

\* Approximate price, Portland.

## Milk and Butterfat Prices

If the price of milk is high compared to the price of veal, one may not receive the value of the milk when the veal is sold without any allowance for labor and other costs. However when milk is sold as surplus or manufacturing milk, prices are relatively low and one can often realize a larger return by feeding calves for veal. This is illustrated in Table 2 for a calf weighing 70 pounds at birth and vealed at 200 pounds.

## Selling Prices of Different Grades

Another main consideration is the selling price. Veal sold on the market is graded according to fatness, finish, age, and weight. PRIME and CHOICE veal, the highest grades, sell at approximately 5¢ more per pound than GOOD, the next highest classification. Likewise, GOOD veal usually sells for about 5¢ more per pound than STANDARD, and STANDARD veal 5¢ or more per pound than CULL or UTILITY. That it is desirable to produce the highest possible grade is illustrated in Table 3.

## Feeding and Management

In feeding calves for veal, the object should be to make the highest grade. This means growing and fattening the calf as quickly as possible. The easiest and most successful way is to feed the calf as much whole milk as it will take, or allow it to nurse the dam or a nurse cow. Hand feeding is the best procedure. It enables one, by weighing the milk, to use judgment in the rate of increase, and to take precautions to prevent digestive disturbances. Only sweet milk at blood temperature (100° F.), fed out of clean pails, should be used. Use of a nipple pail is recommended. When the calf drinks slowly with its head in an elevated position, the milk will go directly to the true stomach rather than

falling into the rumen (paunch). The calf does not ruminate, consequently milk in the rumen will putrefy and cause digestive disturbances.

A calf being fed for veal should be kept alone in a dark, clean, well-bedded pen, and should be controlled so that it exercises very little. It requires energy for the calf to run and play, with the result that fattening is slower. Also, exercising tends to make the muscle tissue darker, which is undesirable to the average housewife. It is the usual practice in Denmark, Holland, and other European countries to place calves in small, darkened stalls when being fed for veal.

Experiments have shown that calves fed whole milk and maintained in dark stalls gained on the average 2.2 pounds daily. Calves allowed whole milk from nurse cows gained 1.7 pounds daily. Calves fed skim milk and grain gained a little more than 1 pound daily. Many experiments have shown it is impossible to grow the calf quickly enough to make a good grade of veal on skim milk and grain. If the calf grows slowly, it is usually 8 or 10 weeks old at marketable age and does not show finish. Thus it goes into the grade of Cull or common veal that sells at a price much lower than top grades. Milk-fed calves show the nearly white-colored flesh desired in the highest quality veal. This color will not be attained if hay and grain are fed.

For the profitable vealing of calves:

- Select a calf which is large at birth.
- Feed the calf all the whole milk it will take in order to grow it rapidly.
- Maintain the calf in quarters sanitary in every way, but not too roomy so it will not use much energy in exercise.