

Recommended code of practice for the care and handling of farm animals

Veal Calves

THE CODES OF PRACTICE:

The Codes of Practice are nationally developed guidelines for the care and handling of different species of farm animals. Codes are not intended to be used as production manuals; instead, the Codes are designed to be used as an educational tool in the promotion of sound husbandry and welfare practices. The Codes contain recommendations to assist farmers and others in the agriculture and food sector to compare and improve their own management practices.

THE VEAL CODE:

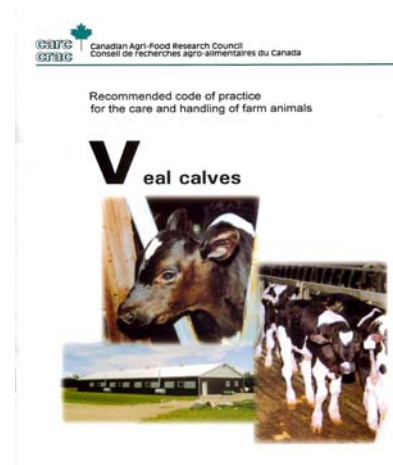
This code of practice, revised in 1998, deals with the care and handling of veal calves only. The successful raising of veal calves under humane conditions is entirely dependent upon the skills, training and integrity of the veal producer.

Animal welfare considerations are vital to keeping and raising of animals. Practices are being reassessed and modified according to new knowledge and changing attitudes. High standards of animal welfare are important and have direct economic benefit to the Canadian Veal industry. Providing competent handling and an environment that allows veal calves to fulfill their basic needs are crucial elements in putting this Code into practice.

The following definitions are used to identify classes of calves in the industry:

- Bob veal - calves that are less than 4 weeks old, male or female;
- Grain fed veal - calves reared on a feed program utilizing milk-based feeds for the first six weeks then given a whole grain-corn and protein supplement diet;
- Milk fed veal - calves reared on a feed program utilizing milk-based feeds.

This factsheet highlights a small amount of the information found in the complete Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Veal Calves.



A copy of the complete Recommended Code of Practice can be obtained from your local commodity organization or provincial agricultural office or through the CARC web site, www.carc-crac.ca.

HIGHLIGHTS:

Housing:

- Calves should be housed in conditions conducive to comfort, health, growth and good performance at all stages of their lives. There are many recommended and successful systems available for rearing calves, but the system selected for use must be properly designed to meet the needs of each calf. Producers must comply with the appropriate Construction Code.

Ventilation:

- Ventilation systems should be capable of maintaining a suitable microclimate to ensure the comfort and welfare of calves.
- Calves of all ages should be protected from temperature changes and drafts.

Light:

- In totally enclosed barns, light of sufficient intensity for the calves to observe one another is recommended for a minimum of 8 hours within any 24-hour period.

Individual Stalls:

- For all new and renovated facilities the current minimum recommended pen size for calves weighing up to 200 kg (440 lb.) is 90 cm x 165 cm (35.5 in. x 65 in.).

Tethering:

- Tethers should not be used in closed stalls. Tethering may allow animals to be kept in open and larger stalls, providing a greater degree of visual contact between calves and greater ease in adopting resting positions.

Group pens:

- Group pens should be large enough to allow all animals to lie comfortably at the same time. Group sizes should be kept to a manageable size. Group size is under review and management is the most critical factor.
- To reduce the incidence of falling and aggression between calves, as well as providing rest areas, moveable barriers should be used within a group pen.

Group housing involves less restriction on the behaviour of calves and allows for greater social contact between calves. Group housing is now widely used in Europe. *However, there are inherent difficulties in providing individual care for each calf, and there is increased risk of disease transmission, particularly during the first 4 weeks of life.* Calves in group pens require a higher degree of husbandry to ensure their health and well-being. On-going research is being conducted to improve group housing. Producers are encouraged to monitor developments in this form of housing.

Feed and Water:

- Producers should be familiar with the basic nutritional requirements of their calves. Producers should be fully aware of the feed products, recommended feeding and mixing procedures, and the feeding programs selected for their calves.

Feeding:

- Drinking water and water for feed mixture should be potable water. Potable water is defined as ice free, uncontaminated water, fit for animal consumption.
- If not fed ad libitum calves should be fed two or more times per day following a regular routine.

Calf Selection for Veal Production:

- The well-being of veal calves during rearing depends on the state of the calf's health on arrival at the veal operation. The calf's health will be affected by its post-natal nutrition and management, the period of transportation, including the time at the sale yard, its management and nutrition on arrival. Calves should be selected carefully, and unhealthy or unfit calves should be rejected. Research has shown that calves are generally healthier when bought directly from a dairy operation than from auctions or sale yards.

Calf Arrival:

- Housing facilities to accommodate calves should be prepared before calves arrive on the producer's premises. All pens should be clean, disinfected and dry. All equipment should be operating at a level necessary to maintain a suitable environment for the calves.

Handling Newly Arrived Calves:

- Transportation to the veal operation should be planned so that the calves arrive when there are sufficient people available to unload them and care for them immediately.
- Calves should be unloaded with care so as to avoid any undue stress. Use of electric prods is not acceptable.
- A prophylactic plan should be prepared in consultation with a veterinarian. Such a plan should include: provision of electrolyte/minerals/vitamin mix on arrival, a program of vaccination and preventive medicine and suitable parasite control.

Personnel:

- All personnel working with calves should understand and accept their responsibility to prevent avoidable suffering of calves.
- Producers should be satisfied that attendants are able to recognize behavioural symptoms that indicate discomfort or disease problems, and when to consult a veterinarian.
- Working routines of attendants should be consistent and performed on a regular schedule. Movement of people and equipment in and around pens should be accomplished in a manner that minimizes excitability of calves.
- It is advisable that attendants wear clothing of similar appearance and provide an easily perceivable signal before entering the area where the calves are housed.

Health Management:

- A basic requirement of a successful veal operation is good preventative health management. A sound health program relies on a valid-veterinary-client-patient relationship.
- Attendants should regularly check all calves for evidence of disease, injury and external parasites. If

external parasites are detected, corrective treatment should be introduced as soon as possible.

- Visitors to the barns should be kept to a minimum. Visitors should wear protective clothing and move and talk quietly.
- Medical treatments and vaccinations used must be based upon veterinary advice. Particular attention must be paid to dosage (based on body weight), duration of treatment, accepted drug compatibilities and withdrawal time before slaughter. Always read the label.

Transportation:

- Calves of less than 7 days should not be transported.
- Transport personnel should be properly instructed in and knowledgeable of the basic facts of animal welfare and should be skillful in handling calves under varying climate conditions.
- Transport personnel are responsible for the welfare of the calves for the entire stage of transport.

All Recommended Codes of Practice are presently developed by a review committee made of representatives from farm groups, animal welfare groups, veterinarians, animals scientists, federal and provincial governments, related agriculture sectors and interested individuals. The following are some of the organizations that provided input a various stages in the drafting of this Code:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| ● Canadian Food Inspection Agency | ● Dairy Farmers of Canada |
| ● Canadian Federation of Humane Societies | ● Farm Animal Councils |
| ● Canadian Veterinary Medical Association | ● Canadian Society of Animal Science |
| ● La Federation des Producteurs de Bovins du Quebec | ● Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada |
| ● Ontario Veal Association | ● Canadian Meat Council |

In 1995, the Canadian Agri-Food Research Council (CARC) and its Canada Committee on Animals and its Expert Committee on Farm Animal Welfare and Behaviour, took the lead, along with the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies in updating existing codes and developing new commodity codes.

Further information on the process of Code Development can be obtained from the Canadian Agri-Food Research Council (CARC), Heritage House, Building 60, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0C6. CARC website address: www.carc-crac.ca

Request for copies of the Codes can be addressed to the national commodity group and/or specific provincial organizations.

This factsheet was prepared by Penny Lawlis, Animal Care Specialist, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs with assistance of an Editorial Committee. Animal welfare factsheets have been printed and distributed through the financial support of your provincial agriculture department.

September 1998