

The *Veal* Truth.



Eat smart. Eat well.™

Answers to Some of
the Most Commonly Asked
Questions About Veal

“I’m sensitive to issues concerning the humane treatment of animals. What can you tell me about the way veal calves are raised?”

The family farmers who earn their living raising veal calves have a vested interest in maintaining a healthy environment for their livestock. These farmers feed their calves twice a day, clean the floors below the stalls daily, and are always on the lookout for any unusual behavior. If a calf is ill, it is given immediate individual care. These measures ensure the calves will be strong and healthy. Veal farmers have nothing to gain by doing anything other than what is best for the health and well-being of their calves.

“I’ve heard today’s farms are like big food factories. Is that true?”

The image of a food factory couldn’t be further from the truth. Typical veal farms are family operations. And while today’s veal farmers take advantage of modern technology and production practices, it has only led to safer, more caring programs.

“Is veal inspected?”

Of course. Trained government personnel conduct a visual inspection before and during processing. Animals with visible signs of health problems are held for further examination.

Just The Facts

“But aren’t veal calves raised in enclosed boxes?”

No! Most veal farmers invest in building individual stalls for their veal calves, and do so for important reasons. First and foremost, minimizing calf-to-calf contact is the best protection against the spread of disease. Individual stalls also maximize the quality of individual care farmers and veterinarians can give each calf. For example, calves can receive adequate amounts of food and proper doses of animal health products. The stalls are of adequate size to allow the calves to stand, stretch, lie down, and groom themselves. The stalls’ slotted floors allow for efficient removal of waste.

“How long do veal calves stay with the cow? Why are they separated?”

Veal calves are usually the offspring of dairy cows, and are normally separated from cows within three days of birth. This allows the dairy cow to go back to producing milk. This practice also provides health benefits to both cow and calf. Certain types of diseases can be controlled more effectively, and farmers can better monitor the dairy cow for any udder problems.

“What does ‘special-fed’ mean?”

When a calf is “special-fed” (also known as “milk-fed” or “formula-fed”) it means it is receiving a top-notch diet to help it grow healthy and strong. It refers to a nutritionally balanced milk or soy-based diet. These diets contain iron and 40 other essential nutrients including amino acids, carbohydrates, fats, minerals and vitamins. Today, many veal calves receive this special diet.

“What about the claim that veal calves are kept anemic and weak?”

Veal farmers carefully watch each calf to make sure it is not suffering any clinical symptoms of anemia, like weakness or loss of appetite. With a special-fed diet, the calves receive carefully controlled amounts of iron to meet their nutritional needs. Research studies have shown that such diets help maintain normal appetite, health and behavior.

“How else do farmers ensure good health for their veal calves?”

Veal farmers employ specific, government-approved antibiotics to ward off disease. Health products approved for use with veal calves are painstakingly scrutinized by both the Food and Drug Administration and the manufacturer before being put on the market. The FDA also regulates the labeling of the product, the doses permitted, and the withdrawal period.

“I imagine dark, cave-like cattle warehouses. Is it really like that?”

That wouldn't make sense either. Modern veal barns have artificial lighting overhead or receive natural sunlight through windows. Farmers house their calves in properly lit barns to make it possible to monitor the calves regularly, feed the animals, and clean underneath their elevated stalls. Typical veal barns are also heated during cold months and have year-round ventilation to provide clean, fresh air.

“What about testing for residues?”

Each year the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the USDA tests a random sample of veal calves going to market for the presence of residues. Residue violations represent a very small percentage of the sample.

“What else is being done about residues?”

Government, industry and science have joined together to develop a program to address the residue issue. While various solutions have been proposed, the most promising seems to be an industry-wide quality assurance program. Under such a program, individual producers can assure consumers that their products are residue-safe based on strict compliance with good husbandry practices.

This brochure has been prepared to answer questions conscientious consumers might have about veal. We hope that you find it informative. If you desire further information, please do not hesitate to write to us at:

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Funded By America's Beef Producers
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