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Veal

Veal is the meat of calves, in contrast to the beef from older cattle. Veal can be produced from a calf of either sex and any breed; however, most veal comes from young males of dairy breeds^[1] which are not used for breeding.^[2] Generally, veal is more expensive than beef from older cattle. Veal production is a way to add value to dairy bull calves and to utilize whey solids, a byproduct from the manufacturing of cheese.^[3]



Veal carcasses in the meat products sector of the Rungis International Market, France (2011).



Veal is the meat from calves, often dairy breeds.



A cut of veal shank.

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Definitions and types

There are several types of veal, and terminology varies by country:

Bob veal

Calves are slaughtered as early as 2-3 days old (at most 1 month old) yield meat carcasses weighing from 9 to 27kg.^[4]

Formula-fed ("Milk Fed", "Special Fed" or "white") veal

Calves are raised on a fortified milk formula diet plus solid feed. The majority of veal meat produced in the US are from milk-fed calves. The meat colour is ivory or creamy pink, with a firm, fine, and velvety appearance. In Canada, calves intended for the milk-fed veal stream are usually slaughtered when they reach 20 to 24 weeks of age, weighing 450 to 500 pounds (200 to 230 kg).^[5]

Nonformula-fed ("red" or "grain-fed") veal

Calves that are raised on grain, hay, or other solid food, in addition to milk. The meat is darker in colour, and some additional marbling and fat may be apparent. In Canada, the grain-fed veal stream is usually marketed as calf, rather than veal. The calves are slaughtered at 22 to 26 weeks of age weighing 650 to 700 pounds (290 to 320 kg).^[6]

Rose veal (in the UK)

Young beef (in Europe)

Calves raised on farms in association with the UK Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals' Freedom Food (<http://www.rspca.org.uk/freedomfood>) programme. The name comes from the pink colour, which is partly a result of the calves being slaughtered later at about 35 weeks of age.^[7]

Pasture-raised veal

In the United States, there is no legal definition of veal.^[8]

Culinary uses

Veal has been an important ingredient in Italian, French and other Mediterranean cuisines from ancient times. The veal is often in the form of cutlets, such as the Italian *cotoletta* or the famous Austrian dish Wiener Schnitzel. Some classic French veal dishes include fried *escalopes*, fried veal *Grenadines* (small, thick fillet steaks), stuffed *paupiettes*, roast joints, and *blanquettes*. Because veal is lower in fat than many meats, care must be taken in preparation to ensure that it does not become tough. Veal is often coated in preparation for frying or eaten with a sauce. Veal Parmigiana is a common Italian-American dish made with breaded veal cutlets.

In addition to providing meat, the bones of calves are used to make a stock that forms the base for sauces and soups such as demi-glace. Calf stomachs are also used to produce rennet, which is used in the production of cheese. Calf offal is also widely regarded as the most prized animal offal.^[9] Most valued are the liver, sweetbreads, kidney, and bone marrow. The head, brains, tongue, feet, and mesentery are also valued.

Production



Free-raised calves

Culinary uses



Boneless veal cutlets



Minced veal with garlic and shiitake on rigatoni

At birth

Male dairy calves are commonly used for veal production as they do not lactate^[10] and are therefore surplus to the requirements of the dairy industry.

Newborn veal calves are generally given only a limited amount of time with their mothers, varying from a few hours to a few days.^[11]

Housing

Three different primary types of housing used for veal calves: hutches, pens, or various types of group housing.^[12]

Feeding

"Milk-fed" veal calves consume a diet consisting of milk replacer, formulated with mostly milk-based proteins and added vitamins and minerals supplemented with solid feeds. This type of diet is similar to infant formula and is also one of the most common diets used for calves in the veal industry.^{[10][13]}

"Grain-fed" calves normally consume a diet of milk replacer for the first six to eight weeks and then move on to a mostly maize-based diet.^[14]

"Free-raised" calves are raised on open pastures and receive a diet of milk, grass, and fresh water. Furthermore, free-raised calves do not receive antibiotics, which are often a focus of criticism among animal welfare organizations.^[13]

Health

Veal farmers have a priority to provide quality care to the calves that are raised on the farm. A farm veterinarian will create and provide a health program that will promote a healthy herd. Veal calves need proper amounts of water, adequate nutrition, and safe and comfortable environments to thrive.^[15]

Animal welfare

Veal production is a controversial topic in animal welfare and some methods are cited as animal cruelty by multiple animal welfare organizations. These organizations and some of their members consider several practices and procedures of veal production to be inhumane. Public efforts by these organizations are placing pressure on the veal industry to change some of its methods.^{[13][16][17]}

Some of these controversial practices are relevant to both group and individual housing systems.

Restricted space



Restricted living space is one of the practices considered to be inhumane in the veal industry.

In the past, one aspect of veal production cited as cruelty in the industry was the lack of space veal calves were provided. Space was often deliberately restricted by the producer to stop the animal from exercising, as this was thought to make the meat turn redder and tougher.^[18] Modern veal production facilities as utilized in the US allow sufficient room for the calf to lie down, stand, stretch, and groom themselves.^[19] All milk fed veal calves are raised in group pens after 10 weeks of age in the US.^[19]

Abnormal gut development

Some systems of veal production rear calves that are denied access to any solid feed^[20] and are fed a liquid milk replacer. They may also be deprived of bedding to prevent them from eating it. This dietary restriction completely distorts the normal development of the rumen and predisposes the calf to infectious enteritis (scouring or diarrhea) and chronic indigestion.^[21] Furthermore, calves with an underdeveloped gut are more likely to be found to have hairballs in the rumen at slaughter; the accumulation of hairballs in the rumen can impair digestion.^[17] Veal calves raised in the US are fed a nutritionally balanced diet of milk replacer and in most cases are fed a solid feed to promote healthy gut development.^[22]

Abnormal behaviours

Rearing calves in deprived conditions without a teat can lead to the development of abnormal oral behaviour. Some of these may develop into oral stereotypies such as sucking, licking or biting inanimate objects, and by tongue rolling and tongue playing. "Purposeless oral activity" occupies 15% of the time in crated calves but only 2–3% in group-housed calves.^[17]

Increased disease susceptibility

Veal calves' dietary intake of iron was restricted^[20] to achieve a target haemoglobin concentration of around 4.6 mmol/l; normal concentration of haemoglobin in the blood is greater than 7 mmol/l. Calves with blood haemoglobin concentrations of below 4.5 mmol/l may show signs of increased disease susceptibility and immunosuppression.^[17]

Alternative agricultural uses for male dairy calves include raising bob veal (slaughtered at two or three days old),^[23] raising calves as "red veal" without the severe dietary restrictions needed to create pale meat (requiring fewer antibiotic treatments and resulting in lower calf mortality),^[24] and as dairy beef.^[25]

In 2008 to 2009 in the US, the demand for free-raised veal rose rapidly.^{[26][27]}

Veal crates

Veal crates were a close-confinement system of raising veal calves. Many calves raised for veal, including in Canada^[28] and the US, were confined in crates which typically measure approximately 66–76 cm (2.1-2.5 ft) wide. The calves were housed individually and the crates may prevent physical contact between adjacent calves, and sometimes prevent visual contact.^[21] In the past, crated calves were often tied to the front of the crate with a tether which restricted movement.^{[16][21][29]} Floors are often slatted and sloped. This allows urine and manure to fall under the crate to help maintain a clean environment for the calf. In some veal crate systems, the calves were also kept in the dark without bedding and fed nothing but milk.^{[30][31]} Veal crates were designed to limit movement of the animal

because it was believed by producers that the meat turns redder and tougher if the animals were allowed to exercise.^[18] The diet is sometimes highly regulated to control sources of iron, which again makes the meat redder.

In the US, the use of tethers in veal crates to prevent movement by veal calves was a principal source of controversy in veal farming. Many veal farmers started improving conditions in their veal farms in the 2000s.^{[26][32]} Veal tethering is criticized because the ability of the calves to move is highly restricted; the crates may have unsuitable flooring; the calves spend their entire lives indoors, experience prolonged sensory, social, and exploratory deprivation; and the calves are more susceptible to high amounts of stress and disease.^[13] All milk-fed veal calves in the US are now not tethered and are raised in groups by at least 10 weeks of age if not earlier.^[19]

Cruelty to calves

Abnormal bone and muscle development: Calves need to exercise to ensure normal bone and muscle development. Calves at pasture not only walk but also run about, jump and play. Calves in veal crates cannot turn around let alone walk or run. When finally taken out of their crates to go for slaughter, calves may stumble or have difficulty walking. There is a general increase in knee and hock swelling as crate width decreases.^[17] These challenges no longer exist with US farmers adopting the raising veal in groups.^[3]

Social deprivation: Under natural conditions calves continue to suckle 3 to 6 times a day for up to 5 months.^[17] Clearly, veal crates prevent this social interaction. Furthermore, some calves were reared in crates with solid walls that prevented visual or tactile contact with their neighbours. It has been shown that calves will work for social contact with other calves.^[29]

To maintain personal hygiene and help prevent disease, calves lick themselves to groom. Cattle naturally lick all the parts of their body they can reach, however, tethering prevents calves from licking the hind parts of their body. Excessive licking of the forelegs (another abnormal behaviour) is common in stall and tether systems.^[29]

In the US, young milk-fed veal calves may be raised in individual pens up to a maximum of 10 weeks of age and are typically in visual and tactile contact with their neighbors. Milk-fed veal calves are never tethered, allowing them to easily groom themselves.^[19]

Drug use

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations do not permit the use of hormones on veal calves for any reason. They do, however, approve the use of antibiotics in veal raising to treat or prevent disease.^{[33][19]}

In 2004, the USDA expressed concern that the use of illegal drugs might be widespread in the veal industry.^[34] In 2004, a USDA official found a lump on a veal calf in a Wisconsin veal farm, which turned out to be an illegal hormone implant.^[34] In 2004, the USDA stated "Penicillin is not used in calf raising: tetracycline has been approved, but is not widely used."^[33]

Crate bans

Europe

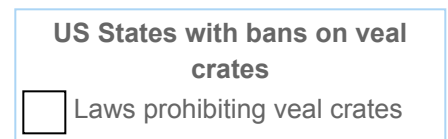
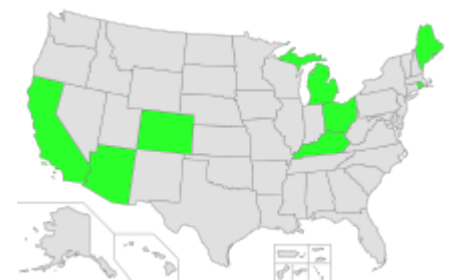
In 1990, the British government banned transporting calves in close-confinement crates.^{[30][31]} Veal crates were banned across the EU in January 2007.^{[20][35][36]}

Veal calf production, as such, is not allowed in many northern European countries, such as in Finland. In Finland, giving feed, drink or other nutrition which is known to be dangerous to an animal which is being cared for is prohibited, as well as failing to give nutrients the lack of which is known to cause the animal to fall ill. The Finnish Animal Welfare Act of 1996^[37] and the Finnish Animal Welfare Decree of 1996^[38] provided general guidelines for the housing and care of animals, and effectively banned veal crates in Finland. Veal crates are not specifically banned in Switzerland, but most calves are raised outdoors.^{[39][40]}

United States

In 2007, the American Veal Association passed a resolution encouraging the entire industry to phase out tethered crate-confinement of calves by 2017, a goal that was met by all milk-fed veal farmers.^{[41][19]}

As of 2015, eight U.S. states ban tethering of calves in veal crates. Nationally, several large veal producers and the American Veal Association are also working to phase out the industry use of tethered veal crates. As of 2017, all American Veal Association members are raising calves in tether free pens and all veal calves are housed in group pens by the time they are 10 weeks of age. State-by-state veal crate bans are as follows:^[42]



- Arizona (since 2012, a part of Proposition 204)^[43]
- California (effective 2015, a part of Proposition 2)
- Colorado (since 2012)^[44]
- Kentucky (Passed in 2014, the Kentucky Livestock Care Standards Commission issued a decision to begin a phase-out period of four years and that by 2018 veal crates will be completely eliminated from Kentucky farms)^[45]
- Maine (since 2011)^[46]
- Michigan (effective 2013)^[47]
- Ohio (passed 2010, effective 2017)^[48]
- Rhode Island (since July 2013)^[49]

Current active legislation in:

- New York (proposed in Jan. 2013 and 2014)^[50]
- Massachusetts (House^[51] and Senate^[52] bills filed annually since 2009; current bills would take effect one year after passage)

See also

- List of beef dishes
- List of veal dishes

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External links

- [Ontario Veal Association \(https://web.archive.org/web/20070723000338/http://www.ontarioveal.on.ca/main.html\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20070723000338/http://www.ontarioveal.on.ca/main.html) — Ontario veal industry in Canada.
 - [Thinking Outside the Box \(http://beef-mag.com/mag/beef_thinking_outside_box/\)](http://beef-mag.com/mag/beef_thinking_outside_box/) — Dutch veal farming from *Beef* magazine
 - [Welfare Implications of Veal Calf Husbandry \(https://web.archive.org/web/20131026210821/https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/Backgrounders/Documents/veal_calf_husbandry_bgnd.pdf\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20131026210821/https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/Backgrounders/Documents/veal_calf_husbandry_bgnd.pdf) from the [American Veterinary Medical Association](#) (PDF format, October 2008)
 - [VealFarm.com \(http://www.vealfarm.com/veal-farming/\)](http://www.vealfarm.com/veal-farming/) — Veal industry in the USA
 - [Veal Recipes. \(http://www.vealrecipes.com/\)](http://www.vealrecipes.com/) A collection of recipes for various cuts of veal, tips on cooking, selection and handling of veal
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