

THE AMERICAN VEAL INDUSTRY: A Commitment to Quality

America's veal industry has moved aggressively in the last few years to strengthen sound animal husbandry and production practices and to ensure that consumers enjoy a quality, wholesome product.

What We've Done

In 1990, as part of the veal industry's commitment to safe and wholesome veal, the AVA initiated the Veal Quality Assurance Program, a voluntary, self-regulated program that commits both veal producers and packers to follow high standards of safety and conscientious animal husbandry. In 1995, the industry strengthened the program by adding a rigid certification process monitored by designated veterinarians. The program's participants are highly dedicated to improving the quality of veal, thus assuring consumers of the reputation and reliability of the American veal supply.

The main objective of the Quality Assurance Program is to reduce if not eliminate any chemical residues in veal calves and to exceed the standards set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service. Educational materials and seminars on the proper use of animal health products have helped produce a ten-fold reduction in the rate of violative residue incidence since 1990.

What's Involved

The American Veal Association (AVA) has developed two certification programs for the industry: the Veal Producer Certification Program and the Veal Supplier Certification Program. The Veal Producer Certification Program applies to veal producers, i.e. those who raise veal calves and deliver the product to market. Under this program, veal producers pledge to adopt a series of quality assurance practices, including:

- establishment of a valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship;
- completion of calf health and treatment records;
- receipt and keeping of inventory lists of all animal health care products; and
- use of high-quality supplies manufactured and distributed by reliable suppliers.

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In the second phase of this program, producers identify and work with a qualified veterinarian to ensure the health and well-being of the calves. The veterinarian's duties include advising the producer on the calf health program; reviewing the producer's mandatory farm program self-assessment; and evaluating on an annual basis the farm plan and self-assessment with the producer.

The Veal Supplier Certification Program was developed by AVA's Veal Quality Assurance committee to ensure that the entire veal industry is committed to producing safe, wholesome meat from the start of the production process to the finish. In order for a supplier to become certified, the supplier must sign an agreement to follow a number of strict guidelines, including:

- specific stipulations on the purchasing and receiving of ingredients;
- the labeling and accurate use of formulas;
- the mixing, bagging, and shipping of products; and
- the usage of correct labels and tags.

The Benefits of the Quality Assurance Program

The Quality Assurance Program has been highly successful in reducing and preventing violative chemical residues in calves by lowering incidence levels from .86 percent (about 1 carcass per 100) in 1989 to .075 percent (less than 1 carcass per

1,000) in 1994. The program has also made strides regarding "pre-harvest food safety" by focusing on safeguards against bacterial contamination of food products through animal husbandry. Participants are obligated to keep the calves as clean as possible during the growing period, prior to loading, and while in

transport in order to reduce the possibility of contamination.

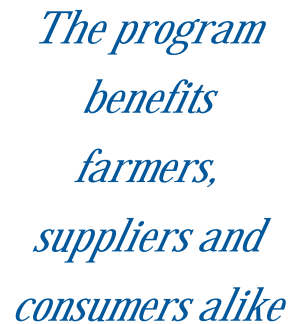
The veal industry's Veal Quality Assurance Program has benefited veal farmers, suppliers and consumers alike:

- ***The program benefits veal farmers*** by enabling them to identify production practices that may need attention and

improvement; to treat or prevent calf health complications more quickly and correctly; and to raise calves in compliance with all regulatory standards.

- ***The program benefits suppliers*** by certifying to veal producers that the suppliers' medicated feeds and products are correctly labeled, wholesome and free of all harmful residues. In addition, VQAP encourages producers to purchase products from suppliers named on their list of recommended, certified suppliers.

- ***Most importantly, the program benefits consumers*** by instilling continued confidence that the veal industry is committed to providing them with a safe and wholesome product and to increase the trust the consumer has in veal production and veal products.



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