

THE AMERICAN VEAL INDUSTRY:
**Producing a
Special Product**

America's special-fed veal industry comprises more than 1,300 family farmers operating principally in 11 producing states: Wisconsin, Indiana, California, Florida, Georgia, Washington, Texas, Ohio, Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania. Although only about 30 years old, the industry today produces approximately 750,000 special-fed veal calves a year.

Because veal farmers recognize that their livelihood depends upon the health and well-being of their animals, the humane production of veal calves is a top industry priority. Accordingly, veal farmers have implemented modern technology and animal husbandry practices that were developed with the guidance of leading animal science experts and veterinary organizations. The result is a nutritious, low-fat, delicious meat product enjoyed by millions of consumers.

What are Veal Calves?

The veal industry is closely linked with dairy farming, which is the reason veal is mostly produced in large dairy states. In order for dairy cows to continue to be milked, they must give birth each year. Usually, female calves are kept by the farmer for replacing cows in the herd. But prior to the development of the special-fed veal industry, male calves have little value to dairy operations.

Today, veal farmers purchase surplus dairy calves, primarily male Holstein calves, at about 100 pounds of live weight and raise them for approximately 18-20 weeks,

until they weigh upward

of 425 pounds.

During this time period, special-fed veal calves are raised in an environment that allows each animal to receive individual, specialized care on a regular basis.

Impact on the U.S. Economy

As a \$650-700 million industry, special-fed veal production is an important part of the U.S. economy. Veal production benefits the dairy industry both by providing a market for surplus calves and by purchasing dairy by-products for milk replacement formulas. Nationally, more than \$250 million is added to the dairy industry through purchases of dairy by-products and calves. This includes more than \$50 million in

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they and \$100 million in milk proteins.

However, while the veal industry helps to make the dairy industry more profitable and efficient, veal production should not be confused with "factory farming" and "big business." The image of a factory farm can't be further from the truth with veal farming.

Typical veal farms today are family operations that allow farmers to earn their living by raising the calves in a healthy environment employing recommended animal husbandry practices. Unlike other industries, veal production is very labor intensive and requires farmers to provide constant care and attention to each animal. This is why the typical family veal farm has an average of 250 calves, and why large, commercialized veal farms have not been very successful.

The American Veal Association

The American Veal Association (AVA) was founded in 1984 and currently represents 1,300 veal farmers,

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producers, and processors. Its charter is to work with the veal industry to ensure that American consumers have access to safe, wholesome veal.

To achieve this goal, the AVA is active on many fronts. AVA represents the industry's concerns in the legislative arena, coordinates

production-related issues affecting the industry, and administers the Veal Quality Assurance Program. The AVA's duties include:

- actively promoting the veal industry on a national level;
- promoting the increased consumption of veal;
- producing information and direction to public agencies and/or elected officials on issues concerning the veal industry; and
- encouraging cooperation between veal producers and all other segments of the special-fed veal industry.

For more information on veal, contact the American Veal Association at (717) 985-9125.