



## VFO RESEARCH PRIORITIES

November 2020

Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) is committed to, and is working towards, the continuous improvement of its research programming, recognizing that research is an integral support to producers, processors, and the entire veal value chain. In developing its updated research priorities, VFO consulted with its members through an online survey as well as with one-on-one telephone interviews with key producers and industry stakeholders. Below are the research priorities, for both male dairy calves and grain-fed veal, that have been identified as priorities for the veal industry.

Overall, central to VFO's goals of veal cattle research are reducing antimicrobial usage and lowering cost of production. The VFO Board of Directors has approved the following veal specific research priorities:

- Establishing new practices and standards that reduce antimicrobial usage.
- Investigate methods of barn ventilation, specifically natural air ventilation, to lower the prevalence of respiratory illness.
- Determine the appropriate time, type, and amount of fibre that should be included in veal cattle feed.
- Determine feeding practices that reduce number of days on feed, specifically the appropriate corn to supplement ratio.
- Establish the benefit of all producers receiving calf health and age records.
- Mitigating the effects and transmission of S. Dublin and bovine respiratory syncytial virus.

Below is a summary of questions the veal industry would seek additional investigation and feedback on:

### **Health and welfare**

Health and welfare of male dairy calves is of the utmost importance to VFO. Male dairy calves enter veal farms with an unknown health status and with emerging diseases like *Salmonella* Dublin it is critical that veal producers understand the risks and how to mitigate them. Identifying diseases and ways to identify alternative treatments and management programs will improve the health and welfare of the calves while reducing antibiotic use.

*What is the prevalence of Salmonella Dublin in the male dairy calf population and what treatments are available to reduce antibiotic usage?*

### **Feed**

Research on feed stuffs and feeding programs have not been investigated for several years. In the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Veal Cattle one of the requirements is the inclusion of fibre and producers would like to know more about the benefits of including fibre in a ration.

*What aspects of the inclusion of fibre in a grain-fed veal feeding program are important to rumen health including ways to improve average dairy gain and reduce days on feed?*

### **Barn design and ventilation**

Veal cattle are primarily raised in indoors and ventilation continues to be a challenge on most veal farms. Ventilation systems have changed over the years and veal producers would like to know ways they can improve the health and welfare of veal cattle by understanding how to improve ventilation.

*What is the optimal ventilation system for veal cattle at different stages of production?*