BULL CALVES: Good management pays dividends!

Carol Gillis  
New York Beef Council

Dairy producers second career: Beef producers

Dairy producers add to the beef supply:
- Veal
- Dairy Beef – “Fed” cattle
- Market Cows – “Non-fed”

You pay the Beef Checkoff and fellow dairy producers represent you at the state and national level.

Dividends

- **Monetary** – more money in your pocket!
- **Industry Image** – Animal Welfare & Food Safety

*Good management not only makes “cents”, it’s the right thing to do.*

Statistics

- **United States**: 9.2 million head of dairy cows – approx. 4.5 M bull calves/year
- Total U.S. calf slaughter in 2011 = 838,901  
  2014 = 565,800
- **NYS 615,000** Milk cows that have calved – about 300,000 bull calves/year
**USDA definitions**

- **Veal** is the meat from a calf or young beef animal.
- **Calf**: A calf is a young bovine of either sex that has not reached puberty (up to about 9 months of age), and has a maximum live weight of 750 pounds.

**The Calf Price Rollercoaster**

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<th>JUNE 2015</th>
<th>DECEMBER 2015</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bob veal $.10 – $1.27</td>
<td>Bob veal $.10 – $1.00</td>
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<td>Grower Bull calves Over 92#</td>
<td>$4 - $6.20</td>
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<td>Grower Bull calves Over 92#</td>
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<td>80-92#</td>
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<td>Range $.10 to $6.20</td>
<td>Range $10 to $2.85</td>
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**Career alternatives for Bull Calves**

- **Bob Veal**
- **Special Fed Veal**
- **Dairy Beef**

Source: Country Folks, Weekly Market Report
Veal – USDA definitions

- **"Bob" Veal**: About fifteen percent of veal calves are marketed up to 3 weeks of age or at a weight of 150 pounds. These are called Bob Calves.

- **"Special-Fed" Veal**: Special, milk-fed and formula fed veal calves usually are fed nutritionally balanced milk or soy based diets. These specially controlled diets contain iron and 40 other essential nutrients, including amino acids, carbohydrates, fats, minerals and vitamins. The majority of veal calves are "special-fed."

- **Other not defined veal**: rose veal (grain-fed), "Free-raised" veal, pasture raised, grass fed etc.

Bob Veal

- **Outlet for any calves not picked up for dairy beef or special fed veal.**
- **Boned out & used for hot dogs, sausage, processed meats, small amount for low grade leg cutlets.**
- **Value: 80# calf will yield about 22lbs at about $1.50/lb. Hide worth $8-10.**

Dark Side of the Dairy Industry

- **Why are we concerned?**
  - **Residues** – Second only to dairy cull cows in incidence of residue violations.
  - **Animal Welfare** – calves are in poor condition, taken directly from mother to slaughter, high mortality rate.
  - **Poor return** to the Dairy producer!!!
Bob Veal
Animal Welfare

Public Perception:
MORE than price, value & profit

- Consumers want assurance that animals receive humane treatment.
- VQA for special fed producers
- FARM & DBQA for dairy producers

Animal Welfare:
Abused Calves at Vermont Slaughter Plant

Bushway Packing, Inc. of Grand Isle, Vt.,
October 2009

Videotape from the investigation reveals that dairy calves only a few days old—many with their umbilical cords still hanging from their bodies—were unable to stand or walk on their own. The tape shows that the animals were kicked, slapped and repeatedly shocked with electric prods and subjected to other mistreatment.

Sharing Responsibility

Special Fed Veal

- Also referred to as Nature Veal or Milk fed
- Industry developed in the 70’s as a use for by products of dairy both calves & milk
- Uses by-products of the dairy industry e.g. whey, whey protein concentrate
- Milk diet for 18-22 weeks
- Finished weight is 450-500 lbs
- Moving from stalls to group housing to be complete by 2017.
**Special Fed Veal**

- Cost of calf currently $200-250
- Feed consists of whey, whey protein concentrate, vegetable & animal fats & premixes
- 20 week old calf will consume 600-700 lbs of milk based feed at a cost of $500-600.
- Most farms now include some solid feed e.g. roughage or pellets at varying levels & cost.
- Current carcass value is $4.30- $4.65/lb. or total value of $1225-1325 for a 485lb calf.

**What do they look for in calves?**

- Ideal weight range 92 to 120 lbs but with pressure from beef, lower weights are acceptable.
- Dried & dipped navel
- No signs of scours or dehydration
- No signs of respiratory problems
- Good confirmation not boney structures
- Fed colostrum

**Cost of production**

- White tablecloth restaurants & Cruise ships
- Italian cuisine, chops for steak houses
- Lean, nutritious, & delicious
- Veal consumed (boneless retail weight)
  - High 1975 = 2.8 lbs/person
  - Low 2014 = .2 lbs/person

**Special Fed Veal – a premium protein**
**Dairy Beef: premium calf prices**

**Effect of low beef cattle numbers**
- Increased price of dairy calves
- Decrease in special fed veal

**What’s happened to cattle numbers?**

- 2014 total inventory 88.5 Million
- Beef cows = 29.1 Million, Dairy cows = 9.2 Million

**What determines price for dairy beef calf?**

- Beef Supply
- Price of Feeder calves
- Price of corn
- Competition for veal
- Proximity to dairy feeders
- Experienced calf raisers to get calves to 275-400 lbs.
West coast “calf-fed” model

You tube video National Beef - Brawley Beef
- Calf raiser takes to 275 lbs.
- On feed for 330 days
- Need healthy day-old calf; top-notch calf raiser and sound feeding practices.
- Biggest variable is price of corn.
- Holsteins becoming more integral to high quality beef production.

Holstein Steers:
How they differ from Beef breeds

PROS
- Tight genetic pool – more consistent product & feedlot performance
- Age & Source verified
- High % prime

CONS
- Less muscular with a lower muscle to bone ratio
- Smaller ribeye area
- Different muscle shape
- Longer feeding period
- More corn needed to finish them.

Value of calves is influenced by the dairy farm looking after its responsibility to the calf.

- Colostrum & proper nutrition afterwards. Do not feed medicated milk replacer!
- Good maternity pen management & dip the navel
- Good housing & Clean environment.
- Follow biosecurity & cleaning protocols
- Feed within 6 hrs of transport. At least 3 days or more of age before transport
- Proper transport & handling.

Must feed calves as if they are going direct to slaughter to prevent residues!!!

Care before leaving the farm

1. Do not leave calves in drafty/wet/poorly bedded area to be picked up - they should be housed comfortably and suitably at all times.
2. Ensure that all calves have dry navel cords, are free of scours and have no abnormalities (bad joints, bad legs, droopy ears etc.)
3. DO NOT SHIP A SICK CALF.
4. Ensure that your calves get a proper feeding just prior to being shipped away
5. ALWAYS have water available to these calves!
**Buyer Checklist**

- **Age, Weight & condition**
  - 3-7 days old
  - 85+ pounds
  - No. 1: muscle thickness & fleshing
- **Locomotion:** walks unassisted
  - Normal posture & stand
  - Joints strong, straight, not swollen
  - Hooves firm, not soft or bulbous
- **Health:** dry healed navel
  - Normal breathing, moist nose
  - No diarrhea or evidence of scours
  - Clean, healed navel, no swelling
- **Appearance:** Shows good care
  - Head up, ears alert, bright eyes
  - Hair coat smooth, dry & clean

*Wet navel is indicator that the farm does not care about the welfare of the calf!*

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**Management determines Value**

*It’s that simple.*

**Everyone benefits.**

- Better price to the dairy farmer.
- Better future performance to the next veal/beef producer.
- Better return for the auction market.
- Favorable image to our consumers.

*Your actions or inactions will influence other industry sectors!*

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**Thank you!**