

## **Record-Keeping for the VVP: Where to Start and Why Recording Mortalities is Important**

The Verified Veal Program (VVP) is the on-farm food safety program that provides customers with the assurance that the veal produced in Canada is of the highest quality. Through a series of practices, protocols and records, producers are able to document the great job they are already doing and have it verified by a third party audit.

Keeping detailed records is a key component of good management. Not only do records help you keep on top of production, feeding and profitability, when done properly they also ensure you're meeting food safety and traceability requirements. Most importantly, they're a great tool for continuous improvement of your farm.

Record-keeping is an essential component of the VVP and it's easy to get started. After reviewing the Producer Manual, the next step in the VVP registration process is to begin keeping the necessary records and establishing protocols, all of which are fully described in the manual.

Record-keeping forms can be found in Section 3 of the Producer Manual. You may use these, or your own forms, provided they contain all of the required information. Designate a place to keep your records – it's important for your staff to also know where the records are, and how to fill them in as well.

Some records in the VVP are mandatory, and some need to be filled in daily or as needed, monthly or yearly. One of the key records in the VVP is the Veal Treatment & History Record. This template allows you to record all of the treatments you administer, individually and to groups, keep track of withdrawal times and record the outcomes of treatments, including mortalities. Assessing mortality rates and causes will allow you to determine why your losses are occurring and what age group is most impacted. It can help you better direct your efforts and better define how management changes are impacting overall herd production.

You also need to record the ear tag number of all dead veal cattle in the Veal Treatment & History Record. If leaving the carcass for deadstock collection in a designated area (also a requirement of the VVP), the ear tag must be left in the carcass. If you are disposing of the carcass on-farm, you need to call the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) and retire the tag number (by reporting the death, you are providing final traceability – i.e. the animal won't be leaving your premises). If you are sending an animal for deadstock, the collector will report for you. While there are no rules regarding whether or not you need to leave the ear tag in the carcass you properly dispose of on-farm, the tag won't compost or decompose. Some producers prefer to remove it and dispose of it (they cannot be reused), so you can be sure it has been retired.

Record-keeping isn't as daunting a task as you may expect, you just need to get started. Once you have three months' worth of records, contact the Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) office to set up your on-farm audit. Once you have started keeping the records, you must store them for a minimum of two years before they can be destroyed. This ensures that you have proof of what happened to a particular animal in case a food safety issue arises and the different records such as the Veal Treatment & History Record and Outgoing Veal Record, can help you record traceability.

For your copy of the VVP Producer Manual, contact the VFO office at (519) 824-2942 or [info@livestockalliance.ca](mailto:info@livestockalliance.ca)