



# The Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Veal Cattle

## Housing requirements

Producers are always looking to find a balance of health, welfare, and productivity. At times, such as designing calf housing, the balance can be difficult to pinpoint. Often, producers individually house calves to improve health by reducing the spread of diseases and allow individual care and monitoring of each calf. Group housing can have benefits such as allowing calves to perform normal social behaviours and even encourage calves to eat more solid feed, leading to higher weight gains. However, many producers worry about disease spread in group housing. Research has found that, contrary to popular belief, despite the ease of monitoring calves in individual housing, calves kept near others can still become sick from airborne pathogens (such as those causing respiratory disease). For this reason, calves kept in small groups of two to ten are just as healthy as calves kept individually in the same area as other calves. Monitoring the health and productivity in calves in groups is possible, but can require a more skilled stockperson. Another common concern is cross sucking. Group housed calves can be managed to prevent and reduce cross sucking. An upcoming *“Calf Care Corner”* will address how to manage calves to prevent cross sucking.

Due to the lack of proven health risks and the improved welfare and production of housing calves with at least one other calf, the Draft Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Veal Cattle has laid out requirements that, **as of December 31, 2020, calves must be group housed as young as possible and not later than 8 weeks of age.** On the same date, the tethering of calves is prohibited in veal operations.

Producers with existing indoor stalls may continue to use these for the life of the stalls if they allow calves to groom, adopt a sternal resting posture (laying on chest), easily stand up and lie down, and have visual contact with other cattle. As with the other housing methods however, **these can be used for calves up to a maximum of 8 weeks of age prior to group housing.**

Outdoor hutches and enclosures have a shorter deadline. **Calves in outdoor housing must be grouped as young as possible and at eight weeks at the latest as of July 1, 2018.** Calves in outdoor housing must also be able to stand fully upright without touching the top of the enclosure. The sooner deadline for outdoor housing reflects the fact that typical outdoor housing such as hutches can be moved together and penning can be expanded to create a pair or group more easily than most indoor housing can be modified.


If producers are planning renovations to help them meet the new code requirements, to improve welfare and productivity, or to meet customer demand, the **renovations must follow new code requirements.** As of July 1, 2018, all holdings which are newly built, substantially renovated, brought into use, or where existing stalls are modified must be done so to allow calves to be group housed as young as possible (not later than 8 weeks old) and individual housing must allow calves to turn **completely around without assistance**, groom, adopt sternal (laying on chest) and **lateral (laying on side with legs extended) resting postures**, easily stand up and lay down, and have visual and physical contact with other cattle.

The changes in the Code reflect current science as well as a consensus of diverse industry stakeholders (from producers to retailers). These changes have an aggressive timeline, but it is important to remember that producers have been transitioning away from individual housing over the last ten years and many are already operating within the guidelines of the new code. Common concerns of group housing calves can be overcome with good stockmanship, and the code committee is confident that Canadian veal farmers will be able to meet the new requirements to improve welfare, health, and productivity of veal cattle.

Looking for information on veal cattle welfare? Go to our website <http://ontarioveal.on.ca/>. ■

## Summary of draft requirements by housing type:

Type of individual housing	Specifications	Phase in date
Existing stalls/ individual housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Permitted for the life of the stall if:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stalls allow calves to groom, adopt a sternal resting posture, easily stand up and lie down and have visual contact with other cattle</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>Fall 2017 (Code release date)</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual housing is used for a maximum of <b>8 weeks of age</b> prior to group housing</li> </ul>	<b>Dec 31, 2020</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tethering is prohibited</li> </ul>	<b>Dec 31, 2020</b>
Hutches or outdoor enclosures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Calves must be able to easily stand up and lie down, turn completely around without assistance, groom, adopt sternal and lateral resting postures and have physical or visual contact with other cattle.</li> </ul>	<b>Fall 2017</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Calves in hutches and other outdoor enclosures must be able to stand fully upright without touching the top of the enclosure.</li> </ul>	<b>Fall 2017</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Calves in hutches and other outdoor enclosures must be grouped as young as possible and not later than <b>8 weeks of age.</b></li> </ul>	<b>July 1, 2018</b>
New or renovated stalls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tethering is prohibited</li> </ul>	<b>Dec 31, 2020</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Calves must be housed in groups as young as possible and not later than <b>8 weeks of age.</b></li> </ul>	<b>July 1, 2018</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow calves to turn completely around without assistance, groom, adopt sternal and lateral resting postures, easily stand up and lie down and have visual and physical contact with other cattle.</li> </ul>	<b>July 1, 2018</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tethering is prohibited</li> </ul>	<b>July 1, 2018</b>



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