

# SUNKEN FLANK

## What is it and why it is important?

A sunken flank is a predictor of disease risk in young calves. These calves have a four times greater risk of dying in the first 21 days.

This resource is designed to help both dairy and veal producers have a better understanding of the importance of ensuring all calves are well-fed before shipping and to be fed as soon as they arrive at the veal facility.

**Did you know?** Calves are born with two per cent brown adipose tissue (brown fat). This is not a lot of energy reserve for young calves.



### Calf anatomy

**Paralumbar fossa**—looks like a triangle

The triangular boundaries of the paralumbar fossa are between the last rib and the thigh.

**Lumbar transverse processes**—the flat part above the triangle



### Sunken flank

A sunken flank is present when a calf has a hollow abdomen or depression in the paralumbar fossa (triangle).



### On arrival

This photo is a great example of how sunken a calf's flank can be on arrival at a veal facility, which is a visual indicator of how hungry the calf is.

When calves are this hungry, they will utilize their own body fat (brown fat) for energy. Calves presenting with sunken flanks have a higher risk of morbidity (sickness) or even mortality (death).

**NOTE:** Feed all calves within the hour before leaving the farm.



### Post arrival

After a couple feedings, the paralumbar fossa (triangle) is filling in. It will take multiple feedings to fill the triangle when they have been very empty.

When calves leave the dairy farm, their destination is not known, therefore the time to the next feeding could be longer than 12 hours.



### The goal

This is the goal! This calf is well-fed and full.

The triangle is hard to identify.

This calf will have the energy reserves to fight disease, grow, and be a productive member of the herd.

**Feed calves before transporting. Calves should be fed within one hour before leaving the dairy farm.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [WWW.CALFCARE.CA](http://WWW.CALFCARE.CA)**

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