



## The Right Direction

Nebraska Beef Quality Assurance Newsletter

January-February, 2005

Volume I No. I

### The BQA Difference

Fifteen years ago, the Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) program was developed by ‘cattlemen for cattlemen’. Since that time, changes have been made to the BQA guidelines, but the mission has remained constant – “To produce safe, wholesome and quality beef.”

A strong educational focus on injection site lesions in the early 90’s, has changed the results of today’s beef. No longer is the industry facing a 21.6% incidence of injection site lesions in the top butt of fed cattle, but last count in 2000, the incidence rate was less than 3%. The long-term goal is to eliminate injection lesions.

BQA is more than just injection site lesions – it is a complete best management practices program. BQA takes science, research and educational initiatives and merges them with daily production practices and industry standards to impact a producer’s bottom-line in profits/returns, decrease animal health costs and improve records for better tracking of production practices.



### Beef Quality Assurance...

### ...Putting the Pieces Together

As a BQA producer, you can make a difference. Through BQA you and your fellow cattlemen can reach high standards set in the industry to ensure that consumer confidence and satisfaction remain top priority.

Enjoy this first issue of ‘*BQA – The Right Direction*’ as we let you see the difference that BQA is making across Nebraska. This newsletter will also provide you with the latest updates that impact quality assurance practices you are implementing.

### The BQA Mission

To maximize consumer confidence and acceptance of beef by focusing the producers’ attention to daily production practices that influence the safety, wholesomeness and quality of beef and beef products.

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### Places to Be

Dec. 8-9, Nebraska Cattlemen Convention, Kearney, NE

Jan. 8-23, National Western Stock Show, Denver, CO

Jan. 25-27, Beef 706, UNL, Lincoln, NE

Feb. 2-5, NCBA Convention, San Antonio, TX



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# Industry Profile

## A DISCIPLINED APPROACH TO BQA

Located on the northeast edge of the Nebraska Sandhills is Bassett Feeding, a progressive 14,000 head feedyard that believes in Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) and has been doing so for the past 14 years. Managing partner at Bassett Feeding since 1989, Ray Carr truly believes in BQA and the disciplined approach of animal husbandry that BQA addresses.

"We have participated in BQA for many years to educate our team and to assist us in presenting the best quality fed animal leaving our feedyard and headed to the packer," Carr says "There is no doubt that the benefits of BQA outweigh the costs."

Improving animal health, initiating proper cattle handling and reducing trim loss impacts the bottom-line at Bassett Feeding. All of these components and more are part of the BQA guidelines presented in the Nebraska Cattlemen BQA program.

"As new issues come into the picture, BQA is the most logical way to approach them and teach a feedyard crew of their importance," Carr says. "The way the BQA program is structured makes it an effective way to accept these practices."

"I can't think of a disadvantage to participating in BQA." The list of advantages however, varies from one producer and feeder to the next but at Bassett Feeding, Bassett, Neb., they focus on the end product they sell to the packer.

By handling cattle properly with low stress techniques and moving injection-sites out of the high priced retail cuts, the amount of trim taken off during processing is reduced. Carr emphasizes that one pound of trim as a result of an improper injection or unacceptable bruise spread across 30,000 head marketed annually, would mean less dollars returned to Bassett Feeding.

"We are in this industry for profitability," Carr says. "We must do things right – especially on the things we have control over."

Carr recalls when industry leaders were first talking about moving the injection site out of the hip region of cattle. "To the beef industry it was scary. It wasn't something we ever thought about," he says. "But through solid educational programs presented by BQA trainers, it was easier for the industry to accept and adopt."

"There is no doubt that the benefits of BQA outweigh the costs."

...Ray Carr  
Bassett Feeding, Mgr.

## BASSETT FEEDING, INC.



(L to R) Kip Lukasiewicz, DVM, Ainsworth Veterinary Clinic with Bassett Feeding Managing Partner, Ray Carr, and Yard Manager Gary Gregg.

Carr mentions that his employees enjoy participating in BQA trainings. They enjoy the opportunity to learn, ask questions and discuss with a professional BQA trainer, ways to improve the job they conduct at the feedyard. Kip Lukasiewicz, DVM, with Ainsworth Veterinary Clinic, Ainsworth, Neb., works closely with Bassett Feeding to maintain their BQA status and training of their employees. Lukasiewicz visits the yard twice a month and conducts audits on vaccine handling, injection sites, pen maintenance and additional BQA guidelines.

"When I do BQA training for feedyard employees, I want to let them know that BQA is more than giving shots in the neck region of an animal," Lukasiewicz says. "Instead, I tell them BQA starts the second the cattle come off the truck and into the yard."

As a veterinarian and a Nebraska Cattlemen BQA trainer, Lukasiewicz believes that how cattle are handled initially has a huge impact on their overall



BQA Trainer - Kip Lukasiewicz, works with the feedlot cowboys to teach them BQA begins with proper handling techniques.

## BASSETT FEEDING, INC. (CONT.)

health and well-being. "I want cattle to feel comfortable around me when I am in a pen and I show the cowboys how to accomplish this task," he says.

Lukasiewicz believes that all feedyards should be certified. He notes that the end goal in the beef industry is to produce a safe, wholesome product for our consumer. "In order to achieve this we must follow strict and ethical guidelines, which insure accountability for that product," Lukasiewicz says. "The BQA program provides these guidelines and provides individuals training to achieve this goal."

Both Carr and Lukasiewicz have witnessed a growth in the number of ranchers and feedyards taking BQA seriously and participating in the program. When Carr is buying cattle to fill his feedyard, price, weight and genetics still play a major role, but if all these things are even and one group is BQA certified and the other not, he notes that BQA can sure have influence on the buyer.

Carr sees many of the industry's current and emerging issues can be influenced by BQA. Issues such as trade (both importing and exporting), disease prevention and maintaining the quality of beef, all seem to have a tie to BQA in Carr's eyes. And for BQA trainer Lukasiewicz, he sees the need for the industry to include the livestock hauler in quality assurance training.



Ray Carr studies the computer printout generated from the processing barn where vaccinations and health treatment records are input as the cattle are treated. Records include animal identification, type of treatment and withdrawal time.

As a cattle feeder for nearly 30 years, Carr enjoys what he is doing and he believes many of his competitors do as well. However, he knows the focus is profitability and the need to make the margin spreads wider. "We have to have more dollars coming in and reduce our unexpected loss." ■

### Practices Emphasized by BQA Trainer Kip Lukasiewicz

- ◆ Safety issues of handling certain animal health products
- ◆ How to properly clean and store syringes
- ◆ Feed safety issues
- ◆ Biosecurity
- ◆ Vaccine handling
- ◆ Administering injections
- ◆ Proper animal handling

## A NOTE FROM NEBRASKA BEEF COUNCIL ...A BQA PARTNER

Producers are committed to delivering a higher quality and safer product to consumers. Consumers are responding with confidence in beef like never before. Consumer expenditures will set new records this year. Cattle Fax projects \$70 billion will be spent on beef in 2004.

Beef demand has increased 16% since 1998. Beef checkoff dollars have addressed the industry's commitment to consumers in a number of ways. None is more important than the support of Beef Quality Assurance programs. The Nebraska Beef Council is a proud supporter of the Nebraska Cattlemen's BQA program and recognizes that BQA is making a difference in the quality and consistency of beef products. This results in more satisfactory eating experiences for consumers and more potential profit for producers. ■



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and

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*This newsletter is published with financial support  
from the Beef Checkoff.*

## THE FOUNDATION OF THE NATIONAL ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM

### **How did the system evolve?**

The National Animal Identification System (NAIS) has evolved since 2002 when industry leaders developed the National Food Animal Identification Plan. The NAIS resulted from further advancement of the work plan through the efforts of the 2003 National Animal Identification Development Team (NIDT). This team was established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA/APHIS), Veterinary Services at the request of the United States Animal Health Association and is composed of approximately 100 animal and livestock industry professionals representing over 70 associations, organizations and government agencies.

The NAIS is able to provide the United States with a system capable of tracing an animal or group of animals back to the herd that is the most logical source of disease of concern, as well as tracing potentially exposed animals that have moved from the subject premises. The long-term goal of the NAIS is to traceback within 48 hours, all locations (premises) where that suspect animal has been during its life. And to provide information on all of the other animals that came in contact with the subject animal at each premises. Success will be dependent on the development of a comprehensive system infrastructure capable of facilitating the ability to collect, record and analyze the movement of animals.

### **Why is it important to track animals?**

The NAIS is needed to maintain the economic viability of American animal agriculture. This national plan will enhance disease preparedness by providing the ability to quickly trace animals exposed to disease, thus permitting rapid detection, containment, and elimination of disease threats. The rapid control of animal disease is essential to preserving the domestic and international marketability of our



*Nebraska Governor Mike Johanns participated in an animal identification demonstration during Husker Harvest Days 2003 as the industry began discussing animal traceability.*

nation's animals and animal products. The NAIS will strengthen the nation's reputation for having a safe food supply and will promote continued confidence in U.S. livestock products.

Having a system that identifies individual animals or groups, the premises where they are/or/were previously located, and the date of entry to those premises is fundamental in controlling any foreign or domestic disease threat. Furthermore, in order to achieve optimal success in controlling or eradicating an animal health threat, the ability to retrieve that information within 48 hours of a disease outbreak confirmation and to implement intervention strategies is necessary. The NAIS is focused on utilizing state-of-the-art national and international standards with the best available and practical technologies.

Data confidentiality remains the producer's greatest concern under this system and the department is exploring appropriate solutions. USDA expects its primary NAIS role to be an issuer of numbers and storehouse for animal data. State agencies and private groups would assign the numbers to producers and relay the data to USDA.

### **Who is supporting the NAIS?**

Currently the dairy, cattle, sheep and swine industries have developed preliminary implementation plans. All other livestock, including goats, cervids, equine, aquaculture, poultry, llamas and bison are becoming engaged in the plan. Some features of the plan common to all species, while others are species specific. A complete list of NAIS participants and other plan information can be found at <http://www.usaip.info>.

### **How will implementation of NAIS occur?**

The NAIS defines the standards and framework for implementing and maintaining a national animal ID system for the United States. It also includes a premises numbering system, an individual and group/lot animal number system, and standards for data and data handling. Ensuring that these standards are recognized in the Code of Federal Regulations and beginning to issue premises ID numbers are immediate priorities.

### **How will the NAIS work in theory?**

Implementation will be in three phases:

- ♦ Phase I – involves making premises ID available; this should be implemented by the fall of 2004.
- ♦ Phase II – involves individual or group/lot ID of animals for inter and intrastate commerce; planned for implementation in February 2005.
- ♦ Phase III – involves retrofitting remaining processing plants, market outlets and other industry segments with appropriate technology that will enhance the ability to track animals throughout the livestock marketing chain. Planned for implementation in 2006. ■

Source: *Western Extension Marketing Committee Animal Identification Fact Sheet. WEMC FS#1-04. Author C. Wilson Gray.*

## NEBRASKA IDENTIFICATION PROGRAM MOVES FORWARD WITH PREMISES REGISTRATION

The first step toward Nebraska's Animal Identification program called Nebraska Animal Verification Enhancement (NAVE) is now underway.

Nebraska producers can now voluntarily register the premises where they have livestock located that will assist the Nebraska Department of Agriculture in building a database for animal traceability.

On Nov. 3, 2004, many Nebraska livestock producers learned a great deal more about the identification program as a result of a statewide satellite conference hosted by University of Nebraska Extension Service. Producers asked questions of Dr. Larry Williams, Nebraska State Veterinarian, Dr. Kathleen Aikin, USDA/APHIS and Greg Ibach, Nebraska Department of Agriculture.

If you were unable to tune into the broadcast, the following are a few of the key questions discussed:

*"The registration of locations where animals are kept is the first step toward establishing a complete individual animal identification system."*

...Greg Ibach  
Assistant Director  
Nebraska Department of Agriculture

### Q. Who is eligible to apply for a premises ID number?

A. Producers of beef cattle and other food animals can register their production facility as a premises in Nebraska. In most cases, the owner of the livestock will register the premises. The owner is recommended to be the one registering the premises because they are then listed as the contact person in the event of a traceback. In the case of a custom feedyard, caretakers of the livestock will be the facility owner and would register the premises.

### Q. What information do I need to provide to register for a premises number?

A. Information needed for registration includes: name and contact information of the owner of the livestock, preferred method of contact (e-mail, telephone, mail) in the case of an emergency traceback. Information about the location includes: name of the facility, address, county, section, township and range. The type of the facility is also needed. E.g. Production unit or Livestock Auction Market (facility choices list on form), and indication whether this facility is the primary or additional facility. A primary contact is also required and this may be the contact information for the owner of the livestock or the caretaker of the livestock.

### Q. How many premises ID numbers do producers need?

A. Only one premises identification number is allowed per location, regardless of the number or type of livestock species kept at that location. In the case of several outlying pastures in addition to the ranch headquarters, one premises ID number is still sufficient if the cattle are moved regularly amongst these units. If a producer has multiple facilities and the livestock are not often moved between units or livestock not commingled with livestock from other facilities, some producers may choose to have separate premises ID numbers for these locations.

For specific questions or more details on Premises ID contact the Nebraska Department of Agriculture at 800-572-2437. ■



### NEW Fact Sheet on Premises ID Available

A new NebFact has been published by the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension service called *Animal Identification: Obtaining a Premises Identification Number in Nebraska*.

The fact sheet discusses the first stage of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) which is registration of livestock premises. NAIS provides guidelines for states to follow.

Each state has the opportunity to adopt animal identification procedures that best meet the needs of its livestock producers.

Information covered in the fact sheet includes: definition of premises, registering for a premises number, and how to complete the premises registration forms.

For a copy contact your local county extension office. ■

#### How to obtain a Premises ID Number

- ◆ Log onto [www.animalid.us](http://www.animalid.us)
- ◆ Call the Nebraska Department of Agriculture at (800) 572-2437
- ◆ Download complete registration forms from [www.animalid.us](http://www.animalid.us) and mail them back to NDA.

Let  
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## BQA Trainer Tips

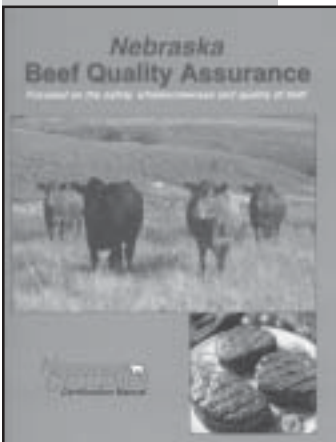


*Susan Reenders, DVM, Cherry County Veterinary Clinic (left) reviews BQA guidelines with area cattlemen.*

...From Susan Reenders, DVM

Weaning time is behind us, but we are still working on getting cows pregnancy tested, vaccinated and poured. Most producers in this area (North Central Nebraska) are very conscientious about giving all injections in the neck. Adjustments have been made in technique and in facilities to make it easier to give BQA qualified injections. Sometimes, it is still tempting to give an ornery cow her vaccination or antibiotic injection somewhere behind the shoulder. But, we need to remember that cull cow meat does get cut into steaks or roasts in addition to ground beef.

As producers become BQA certified or re-certified, they've been given the new revised NC-BQA manual. An important addition to the manual is the section outlining a simple, effective way to clean and store multiple-dose syringes. Clean, properly functioning syringes play a very important role in improving vaccine efficacy and preventing injection site lesions. Not only does this work toward BQA's goal of providing quality product to the consumer, but it also improves the health of producers' cattle. ■



*(Each issue of "The Right Direction" will feature a section directly from the current Nebraska Cattlemen Beef Quality Assurance Manual to refresh your memory of some of the key guidelines).*

Proper  
handling &  
injection of  
vaccines is  
critical.

## Straight From the BQA Manual

### QUALITY CONTROL: MARKET COWS & BULLS

The industry conducted its first market cow and bull audit in 1994. That audit, called the National Market Cow and Bull Quality Audit, discovered that the industry lost about \$70 per cow or bull marketed due to product-quality defects. A repeat study conducted in 1999 tallied the economic loss at \$68.82.

Regardless of herd size, all beef cow operations produce some cull animals. Many of these animals are marketed because they are beyond their prime producing years. Cull cows and bulls represent 15-20% of producer revenue.

In addition, cull animals supply between 15-20% of the total U.S. beef productions, depending on market conditions.

Ground beef is an important product of cull cattle and accounts for 43% of the total beef consumed in the U.S. However, cull cow packers today are also utilizing tenderloins, ribeyes, and strip loins for merchandizing to steakhouses.

One of the larger quality losses among market cows and bulls is bruising. This often occurs because:

- ♦ They possess less fat cover
- ♦ Many cull cattle are lame, which increases the incidence of bruising. ■

*(Page 6)*

### PROCESSING/TREATMENT AND RECORDS

Calves moving through the production chain must stay healthy. Sickness requires treatment and increases the probability of death loss, poor performance, injection site lesions and residues. Proper handling/administration of vaccines is critical to this program. The highest quality vaccine available is useless if it's not handled and administered properly. Many treatment regimes include vaccines to stimulate immune system response and lessen the chance of re-treatment.

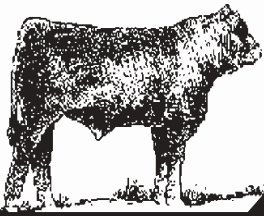
Find and work with a veterinarian who is willing to be involved with the Beef Quality Assurance program. Your veterinarian must be a team player and understand that each animal carries the reputation of your business and the beef industry. Only FDA, USDA and EPA approved products can be used in processing and treatment programs. Caution: not all products offered to producers meet these guidelines. ■

*(Page 12)*

### Record Keeping

Record keeping, either computer or hand-generated, is a critically important management tool.

To ensure consumer confidence and maintain market share, beef producers must be able to document the safety and quality of their product.



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**B Q A**

**A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION**

*Take the step now and join the many  
Nebraska Beef Producers who are  
BQA certified.*

**BQA Certified Trainers**

*are veterinarians, University of Nebraska Extension and Nebraska Cattlemen staff*

**Ainsworth**

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Vergil Heyer  
Kip Lukasiewicz

**Albion**

Richard Cockerill  
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**More than 185 active  
certified trainers can  
assist you with the BQA  
certification process.  
(3 year certification is \$15)**

For more information contact:

**NEBRASKA**  
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402.475.2333

**Beef Quality Assurance is designed to assist producers with implementation  
of daily production practices to ensure safe, wholesome, quality beef.**

## Question From the Field

### What steps do I take to be BQA certified?

The following are the steps needed for certification:

- 1) Contact your local trainer (see list on page 7) and let them know that you would like to be BQA certified.
- 2) Obtain a copy of the NC-BQA producer certification manual from the trainer. Review the manual and complete the 12 question test.
- 3) Sign and review the contract that states you will strive to meet the BQA guidelines and complete required information such as your name and address.
- 4) Plan a time to meet with the trainer to review the BQA program, the test, contract and lastly, have them sign off on your paperwork.
- 5) Mail completed forms to Nebraska Cattlemen along with a \$15 check.
- 6) NC will mail you a NC-BQA Certification Card with a number specific only to you and stating your certification is good for three years.
- 7) Join the more than 2,000 producers/employees statewide that follow BQA practices. ■



*BEEF 706, a producer-oriented program focusing on understanding carcass quality and consistency will be offered Jan. 25-27, 2005 at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln Campus. Contact Nebraska Cattlemen or Nebraska Beef Council for registration information.*



*More than 1,200 people viewed the twice daily Cattle Handling Demonstrations at Husker Harvest Days 2004. In addition to viewing the cattle handling facilities in action, the Nebraska BQA program discussed the importance of safe, low-stress handling during processing.*



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