

## The Right Direction

Nebraska Beef Quality Assurance Newsletter

March - April 2005

Volume I No. III

### The BQA Difference

As we roll into Spring, many cattlemen are scheduling their annual herd brandings. Brandings have been a Nebraska tradition for decades, allowing the opportunity for neighbors to work with neighbors and prepare cattle for summer pasture. In his newsletter *The Ranch Hand*, Greg Lardy, North Dakota Beef Cattle Specialist talks about ranching traditions such as branding and the traditions of hard work, honesty, and being neighborly all of which are part of the cattle business. Lardy says, "The cattle industry is steeped in tradition, but it seems always to be in a state of change."

The Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) program was built much the same way. The program was designed by cattlemen for cattlemen. The tradition of raising cattle is still here, but the way we raise cattle has changed. The industry has focused on learning as much as possible about the product we produce including getting data back on cattle fed out or following a cow's production records on the latest computer spreadsheet. We've also made some dramatic changes like moving injections from the hip to the neck region of the animal to reduce injection-site blemishes.

And cattlemen continue to advance the BQA program to keep up with the times.



The growing emphasis on animal welfare has initiated a focus on animal care and handling to reduce stress, injury and bruising. Initiatives like NCBA's *Cattle Care Guidelines* and a new emphasis on *Cattle Transportation Quality Assurance* are designed for those who have a stake in the livestock industry.

The BQA program has grown because producers have become involved and shared with their fellow cattlemen the importance of being BQA certified. Many cattlemen have told neighbors, bull buyers and other fellow cattlemen about BQA and many feedyards have incorporated the practices to influence the outcome of the products they manage. In Nebraska, a team of more than 190 certified trainers are resources and educators of the BQA principles.

If you are a BQA certified producer, make a point to tell five more people about the program in the next month and encourage them to sign up. If you are not yet a BQA certified producer, here's your opportunity to be part of what is becoming a tradition. ■

### BQA - The Right Direction

BQA is a two-pronged program. It helps inform producers about the latest management techniques and makes consumers more aware of the extra efforts the beef industry is making to deliver safe, quality beef."

Alan Janzen, Nebraska Beef Producer

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### Places to Be

June 2-3 - NC Mid-Year Conference, North Platte, NE

Visit us online for additional events

[www.nebraskacattlemen.org](http://www.nebraskacattlemen.org)



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# Industry Profile

## ASK THEM TO BE SOMEBODY

In the cattle industry we don't often think of "asking cattle to be somebody" but that is exactly what Dr. Tom Noffsinger, Benkelman, Neb., teaches when sharing his knowledge on low stress cattle handling with feedyard managers and their team members.

Dr. Noffsinger has worked with our team for the past year and the one component that he teaches all our cowboys is to "ask the cattle to be somebody", says Gale Merritt, manager of Phelps County Feeders – West, near Holdrege, Neb. "The concept really works well."

Low stress cattle handling methods begin when the cattle arrive at Phelps County Feeders. As the cattle are unloaded, Phelps County team members immediately implement practices they have been taught that will make the transition from the unloading process to the settling process go smoothly. They will monitor the attitudes of the cattle in the home pen, since their goal is to convince the cattle they are truly in their home pen.

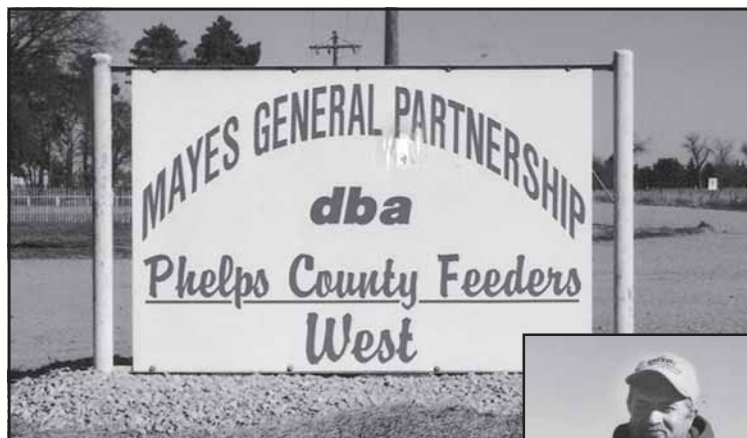
One method of settling the cattle is to have pen riders move through the pens asking all the cattle to move from one end to the other. They will move all the cattle from the front of the pen (near the bunk) and move every animal to the back of the pen with gentle pressure and then gradually let the cattle volunteer back to the front of the pen. This is done in a comfortable setting not pushing or crowding cattle into the space, rather having them walk slowly around the pen. When the cattle arrive back at the front of the pen, they are directed to the bunk to create a positive environment for feeding.

There are two main reasons for this procedure: 1) to reduce anxiety in the animals and 2) to identify unhealthy cattle.



*Reducing anxiety in cattle and increasing their comfort level in their home pen and at the feedbunk is part of the daily routine at Phelps County Feeders.*

## PHELPS COUNTY FEEDERS



*Phelps County Feeders have incorporated low stress cattle handling techniques to their daily management in order to make the transition for a feeder calf to the feedyard a more positive experience.*

*(Insert) Gale Merritt, Phelps County Feeders - West Yard Manager*

**"It's mixing science with cattle handling for the best end results."**

**...Gale Merritt  
Phelps County Feeders**

Noffsinger believes this process convinces cattle to communicate their true state of health to caregivers.

"If an animal is lying down in the pen, he is asked to get up and be somebody," Merritt says. "Every animal is asked to walk and move so that a proper analysis of health and status of that animal can be conducted by the pen rider."

"We ask the cattle to get up and go someplace positive – like the feedbunk," Noffsinger says. "This helps to convince them they are in their home pen. It reduces anxiety in very sensitive animals and increases confidence in more timid animals."

This theory may seem unusual to some producers. However, the goal behind the theory is to introduce people to

the idea that they can train cattle to work for them. Noffsinger believes that everything that animals do in the presence of a caregiver is the result and responsibility of the caregiver. Pen riders can choose to make their experiences with the animal, positive, negative or neutral based on their body language and movement.

Over the past year, the team at Phelps County Feeders has learned techniques of arrival acclimation and stress reduction of weaned calves by working with the cattle to convince them that pen riders are not predators. Cattle will learn to trust the handlers to the degree that the cattle will move straight away or walk by the handlers

## PHELPS COUNTY FEEDERS (CONT.)

with confidence, rather than in a skittish or aggressive behavior.

All team members working with cattle are key players in the success of developing a low stress handling environment. "The processing team and pen riders work together to keep track of pen pulls and monitor if too many or not enough cattle were pulled at a certain time," Merritt says. "In fact, we have developed a pen evaluation scoring system to monitor their work and help them improve."

Merritt explains the cohesiveness that this system has created in his employees. He says a harmony has developed between the pen rider and the doctoring crew to do the best job possible in only pulling animals that truly need pulled.

An additional benefit incorporated at Phelps County is the safer environment it creates for their employees. Cattle are handled in a much calmer, more sophisticated manner and reducing the stress improves the health of the cattle, thus less actual handling has to occur.

"We have really noticed the difference at shipping time," Merritt says. The cattle move much better through the loading channels and this reduces their stress level as they get on the truck".



*Pen riders spend time daily asking the cattle to move around the pen as a method to evaluate their health status.*

Phelps County Feeders consists of two feedyards – a west and east site. Merritt manages the west yard and Joe Klute, manages the east yard. Both sites have incorporated the low stress cattle handling techniques. The results have also paid off in increased gain and less injuries to the cattle.

As the feedyard team members are taught the daily techniques behind the theory, they also learn more about themselves and their abilities to increase their power of observation. This enhanced ability to observe, increases the treatment crews interest in learning more about cattle health and diagnosis. Team members are trained to notice abnormalities in the animals; analyze and evaluate abnormalities and have the confidence to intervene in a timely matter.

## Low Stress Handling By

### BQA Trainer Dr. Tom Noffsinger

Dr. Tom Noffsinger of Twin Forks Clinic, Benkelman, Neb., describes his teaching as; a veterinarian group effort to apply the Bud Williams method of low stress handling. Williams has spent his lifetime studying prey-animal behavior and communication skills between handlers and food producing prey-animals.

Noffsinger has been incorporating this technique into his veterinarian practice for the past 5 years and has seen a much greater interest in the topic in the past 2 years. Noffsinger and fellow veterinarian Dr. Lynn Locatelli also of Twin Forks Clinic, have spent much of the past year traveling around the Midwest teaching the main components of this theory to hundreds of producers and feedyard team members.

Merritt explains that the process has encouraged his staff to view all cattle on a daily basis and interpret the cattle's health status. "Our doctoring crew has now taken an active role in monitoring lung scores on respiratory pulls, to enhance the health monitoring we conduct," Merritt says. "They feel more apart of the team because of the impact they can have on the profitability of our operation."

We are excited about the fact that we have people trained to identify confinement and relocation stress and implement techniques that will eliminate this stress, Noffsinger indicates. "Having people trained to recognize factors that impact animal welfare is important," he says.

Noffsinger also understands how well this theory fits with quality assurance. "If we are reducing morbidity and the need for injection sites – then everyone wins," he says. In addition, identifying cattle early in animal disease control will lessen the need for medication and treatments he states.

It's mixing science with cattle handling for the best end result, concludes Merritt. ■



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*This newsletter is funded in part by the Nebraska Beef Checkoff.*

## PROPER CATTLE HANDLING REDUCES STRESS

Handling procedures must be safe for the cattle and caretakers, eliminating as much stress as possible. Facilities should be designed and constructed to take advantage of cattle's natural instincts. The following are a few key points to review in regard to cattle handling, facilities and transportation of livestock.

### Facilities:

Cattle handling facilities do not have to be elaborate or expensive. Proper design and quick recognition of problems that impede cattle flow are essential for safe, efficient cattle handling.

- Design and operate alleys and gates to avoid impeding cattle movement.
- Adjust hydraulic or manual restraining chutes to the appropriate size of cattle to be handled. Regular cleaning and maintenance of working parts is imperative to ensure the system functions properly and is safe for the cattle handlers.

- Avoid slippery surfaces, especially where cattle enter a single file alley leading to a chute or where they exit the chute. Grooved concrete or rubber mats are some practices used to minimize slipping and falling. Quiet handling is essential to minimize slipping. Under most conditions, no more than 2% of the animals should fall outside the chute. A level of more than 2% should indicate a review of the process.

### General Cattle Handling

- Properly trained dogs can be effective and humane tools for cattle handling. During chute-side cattle processing procedures, dogs that continually bark, impede cattle flow or are unnecessarily rough with the cattle should not be used.

### Sorting, Loading and Transporting

- Cattle sorting and holding pens should allow handling without undue stress,



and be located near the loading/unloading facility.

- Provide properly designed and maintained loading facilities for easy and safe animal movement. Proper design of loading chutes as well as personnel that are knowledgeable of their proper use can assure the safety of cattle and cattlemen. Ramps and chutes should be strong and solid, provide safe footing and have sides high enough to keep cattle from falling or jumping off. Studies indicate limiting the ramp angle to 25° or less will improve cattle movement.
- All vehicles used to transport cattle should provide for the safety of personnel and cattle during loading, transporting and unloading and should have properly maintained flooring, gates, latches and adequate ventilation.
- Avoid overcrowding that will result in cattle being forced down. Provide cattle with sufficient room to stand.
- Cattle that are unable to withstand the rigors of transportation should not be shipped.
- Cattle haulers should start, drive and stop their vehicles as smoothly as possible. Avoid abrupt sharp turns.
- No gap which would allow injury to an animal should exist between the ramp, its sides, and the vehicle.
- Vehicle doors and internal gates should be sufficiently wide to permit cattle to pass through easily without bruising or injury.
- Provide emergency procedures for cattle haulers in the event of a breakdown, an accident or other delay during transit. ■

## Cattle Transportation Quality Assurance

### Project Underway

The Beef Quality Assurance program is adding guidelines on an important component in livestock production - beef quality practices while transporting cattle. This may include ranch hauls from pasture to pasture or the livestock hauling company that transports fed cattle to the processing facility. In each case, the importance of incorporating quality assurance practices into the transportation process is very important.

The Cattle Transportation Quality Assurance (CTQA) program will address the following components:

- a) Cattle behavior and animal-handling procedures
- b) Loading, unloading and hauling practices
- c) Handling non-ambulatory cattle
- d) Biosecurity and emergency transportation procedures.

For example, the program will address the importance of loading and unloading cattle in a proper manner to prevent costly bruising or damage to the animal that will result in carcass defects. Unnecessary bruising causes the beef industry millions of dollars each year and thus educational programs like CTQA are being developed at the state and national level in 2005. Information of proper cattle transportation techniques will be incorporated into future BQA trainings. ■

*(Guidelines for Care and Handling of Beef Cattle, NCBA)*

## THE PRUDENT USE OF ANTIBIOTICS: AN IMPORTANT FOOD SAFETY ISSUE

David R. Smith, DVM, PhD  
University of Nebraska -Lincoln

I recently spoke at a public health conference where the topic was the presence of multidrug-resistant *Salmonella* in ground beef and the concern that these organisms originate on the farm. The topic is important. The appropriateness of using antibiotics in agriculture was questioned. Antibiotics are important for animal health and productivity. The animal caregiver makes important decisions about antibiotics use in food producing animals. Antibiotics should be used prudently to ensure they are effective, do not leave residues in food, and continue to benefit man and animals.

There are important concerns antibiotic resistant bacteria may affect the availability of animal medications. When antibiotics are not used appropriately, the opportunity for resistant bacteria to evolve increases needlessly and can compromise future antibiotic therapy. Many veterinary groups and quality assurance programs have developed guidelines for the prudent use of antibiotics. These guidelines are based on providing the best care for the animal and also protecting public health. Everyone who administers antibiotics to animals should understand and be willing to apply these concepts:

**1. Provide a system of care to prevent common diseases.**

It is more cost effective to prevent disease than rely upon antibiotics to treat disease once it has developed.

**2. When animals do get sick, have an accurate diagnosis.**

This ensures antibiotics will be used for the appropriate clinical indications. Your veterinarian can help provide an accurate diagnosis.

**3. Determine that antibiotics are the most appropriate option.**

Keep in mind the treatment outcomes you want for the animal and what types of therapy will help you achieve them. Will using antibiotics be the most economically sound treatment?

**4. Choose the most appropriate antibiotic for the circumstances.**

Not all antibiotics work the same and each acts against different types of bacterial infections.



**5. Work with your veterinarian to enhance therapeutic options.**

Veterinarians have the knowledge and resources necessary to determine the most effective therapy. You must establish a valid client relationship with your veterinarian before receiving drug prescriptions or using an antibiotic any way other than exactly as labeled.

**6. Use antibiotics and other medications as ordered.**

Train all personnel on disease indications, dosages, routes of administration, injection site precautions, treatment durations, withdrawal times, storage, handling, record keeping, and accurate diagnosis of diseases common for your operation. Pay attention to quality assurance guidelines to protect against drug residues.

**7. Treat the appropriate animals.**

Limit therapeutic antibiotic treatment to those animals that are sick or are legitimately at-risk of becoming sick. Avoid prolonged treatment of animals and consider salvage alternatives for chronic cases or those with a poor chance of recovery.

**8. Store antibiotics and other medications appropriately.**

Drug integrity is maintained by following label and veterinarian instructions for proper handling, storage, and observation of expiration date.

**9. Minimize environmental contamination.**

Dispose of outdated medications according to label directions or veterinary advice. Use disposal methods that minimize contamination of soil and water supplies. Provide feed and water medication delivery so that there is minimal spillage into the environment.

**10. Use records to track treatments and evaluate outcomes.**

Keep accurate, detailed, and current records of antibiotic treatments and outcomes. ■

### VACCINATION TIPS FOR BRANDING SEASON

**1. Keep all injections in front of the slope of the shoulder.**

Dewlap injections are approved for SQ injections.

Do not give shots under the leg since this is not in front of the shoulder and can cause damage to nerves in the auxiliary region.

**2. Keep Records on Products:**

Be sure to record the following on all vaccinations:

Name of Product, Serial Number, Expiration date, and who administered

**3. Storage of Product:**

Keep the product in a cooler with ice packs. Only mix what can be used in 30-45 minutes. Keep the product out

of sunlight. Sunlight is more damaging than heat. If possible, use one of the amber colored barrels to reduce exposure to UV light.

**4. Clean Equipment.**

Clean syringes including barrels with boiling water. Do not use disinfectant to clean since it can harm modified live vaccines if not rinsed very well.

**5. Change needles.**

Since a calf's hide maybe heavily contaminated with manure and debris, change needles more often. In addition, the environment at branding time is dusty and dirty, contamination is at a higher risk. Be sure to change after every 10-15 head or more often if dirty or damaged needle. ■

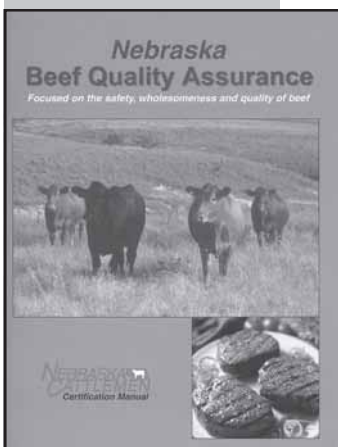
# Let BQA Become The Right Direction

## BQA Trainer Tips

...By Dr. Brent Van Patten, Valley Animal Clinic, Bridgeport, NE

Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) is alive and well at Valley Animal Clinic. We get excited when an opportunity arises to talk about BQA. The producers have a great amount of respect for BQA and what it means for them. It has been one of the easiest things to sell to the producers simply because of what it does and can do for them. The level of education and awareness that the producer comes away with is awesome. They are eager to know and care about their product. They are also proud of what this program does to make their product the most wholesome and such a great value. The strides that we have made in just the feedlot and backgrounding industry since BQA's existence is overwhelming. The real excitement that we get is applying this at the cow-calf level.

When we see the producer's realization of how BQA applies to a calf's life, that is when the complete picture is painted. BQA is indeed an all encompassing program for our producers. At first when we talked to the producers about applying BQA procedures at branding and pregnancy testing times, there was disbelief. Then immediately came the questions and the understanding that this is indeed a complete program. Complete in that all procedures and products **carry forth with that calf and with that cow** to the eventual end product, which is of course **the consumer's plate**. It must be fit and edible. The producers in BQA realize how extremely important all this is, in making their product wholesome and the quality they can proudly say they produced. Our real excitement is that this is becoming an accepted way of the cattlemen's management and what tremendous opportunities this give us going into the future. ■



(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).

Dewlap  
injection  
technique -  
A new option  
for  
vaccinations

## Straight From the BQA Manual

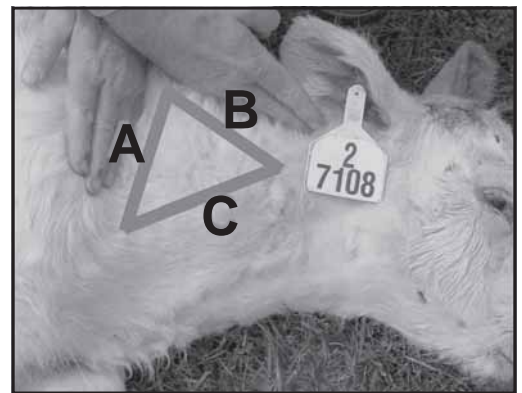
### DEWLAP TECHNIQUE

A subcutaneous (SQ) injection in the dewlap is an approved NC-BQA practice, so long as the injection-site remains ahead of the point of the shoulder. To administer injections in the dewlap:

- 1) Restrain calf on its side. Pull the front leg back and locate the dewlap. The dewlap is the flap of skin from the throat of the calf that follows the neck down to the brisket region.
- 2) Find a location that is ahead of the slope of the shoulder.
- 3) Grasp the skin, using the tenting technique, and conduct the SQ injection
- 4) Use the correct needle size. An 18-gauge x 5/8 inch needle is recommended
- 5) If more than one SQ injection is administered in the dewlap, space injections a hands width apart (at least 4 inches).

The dewlap injection technique is a great option for vaccinations conducted during branding of young calves. ■

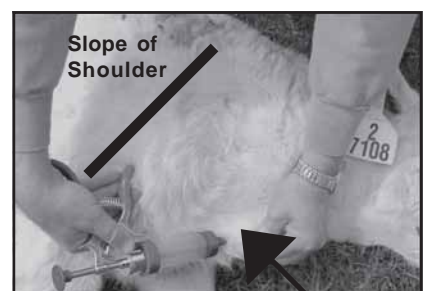
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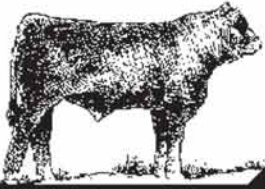
The triangle represents approved injection zone for IM and SQ injections.

The triangle should be drawn out along the following points:

- A = In front of slope of shoulder
- B = Below nuchal ligament; about 3-4 inches from top of neck
- C = Behind vertebrae bone



Subcutaneous injections may be given in the dewlap region by tenting the skin and staying ahead of the slope of the shoulder



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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*

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|  | <b>Gothenburg</b><br>Randy Burge<br>Roger Dudley<br>Robert Nelson<br>Ryan O'Hare         |  |  |   |
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|  | <b>Hayes Center</b><br>Richard Brown<br>Jeff Erickson                                    |  |  |   |

**More than 190 active certified trainers can assist you with the BQA certification process. (3 year certification is \$15)**

**For more information contact:**

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**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 Records Should I keep this Calving Season?

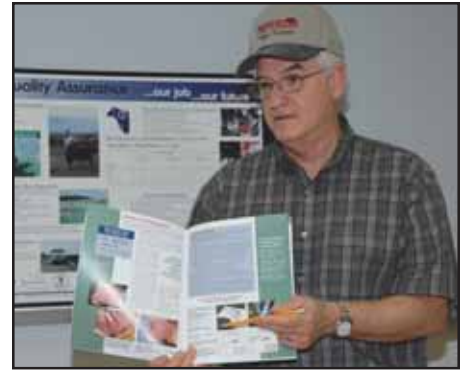
Record keeping has always been an important component of the BQA program. With the industry's current interest in national animal identification and source verification, keeping records this spring will be a good management tool.

Documentation of the age of the calf is important. This can be done by recording the birth dates on individual calves or recording the date of the first calf born and also documenting the end of your calving season. This can be further documented by also keeping a record of the start and end of the breeding season for your cowherd.

University of Nebraska Extension Beef Specialist, Rick Rasby suggests a good starting point is to record:

- Ear tag number
- Date of birth
- Sex of calf
- Color marking of the calf for identification purposes.

Those working with specific source verification programs or a herd management software program may already be keeping a more extensive set of records. ■



Dee Griffin, University of Nebraska Extension Feedlot Veterinarian, dedicates many hours to the Nebraska Cattlemen BQA program as lead instructor for BQA Trainer Certification Program. Over the past two years he has trained more than 190 veterinarians and extension educators to implement the BQA program. Thanks Dee!

*Thank you to all BQA Trainers that make this program successful!*

Special guest, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns stopped by for a visit with UNL students and faculty at the Nebraska trade show booth featuring the University of Nebraska and Department of Agriculture at the recent National Cattlemen's Beef Association Annual Convention, San Antonio, Texas. The display promoted many aspects of Nebraska agriculture to the more than 6,000 convention attendees, including highlighting programs such as Beef Quality Assurance.



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