

VETERINARY CALL

by Bob Larson, Kansas State University

BQA: The Foundation for Doing the Right Thing

There are many aspects of running a cattle ranch that are foundational — aspects that are always done and done well.

These include making sure that cattle are fed and provided water; making sure that grassland and forages are managed to nourish the herd now and in the future; and making sure that cattle that are sick or injured are cared for appropriately.

These foundational procedures are performed every day, regardless of weather, convenience or other priorities. Following Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) guidelines is also foundational for beef cattle producers in the United States.

The BQA program is funded by the Beef Checkoff and is coordinated at the national level and then implemented by the state to provide training to beef producers and information for beef consumers.

On down the line

Producers have two customers to please: the next owner of the cattle in the production chain and the beef-eating consumer. Both customer groups deserve and demand a high-quality product free of preventable defects. The BQA program developed training manuals and videos for all segments of the cattle industry, including cow-calf, stocker and backgrounder, feedyard and trucking.

The training focuses on important topics such as animal handling,

nutrition, cattle health, proper use of chemicals, vaccines, emergency planning, euthanasia, meat quality, and recordkeeping.

The goal is to help cattle producers raise cattle under optimum management and environmental conditions, and to communicate to beef consumers that U.S. producers use commonsense animal husbandry in combination with scientific research. This is to ensure that the beef products they buy are safe and wholesome, delicious, and raised in a way that protects people and the environment.

Connectedness


In a day of increasing connection via the internet, BQA principles are more vital than ever before. BQA began as an effort to ensure that violative chemical residues were not present in marketed beef.

Originally called “Beef Safety Assurance,” the program’s early emphasis was on assuring the safety of beef. However, BQA has become much more than a safety assurance program. Today, BQA training has expanded to include information to help producers address key attributes such as animal health and well-being, biosecurity to protect the herd, good production performance,

environmental stewardship, animal welfare, and recordkeeping systems that satisfy FDA, USDA, and EPA guidelines all while meeting the needs of the cattle producer.

BQA principles have been around for several decades and are supported by the entire beef industry. But the success of BQA depends on each beef producer doing his or her part.

There are two ways to become BQA certified, one way is to attend an in-person training lead by BQA trainers — these training sessions typically last two to four hours. The other option is to take an online course, which takes an estimated two hours.

Regardless of how you become BQA certified, the training will help you design and implement sound management practices. More information about BQA and becoming BQA certified can be found at www.bqa.org. 

Editor’s note: Robert L. Larson is a professor of production medicine and executive director of Veterinary Medicine Continuing Education at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kan.



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