Management

The Importance of Beef Quality Assurance Certification to Enhance Consumer Confidence in Our Industry

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Why become BQA Certified?
Has a consumer ever asked you how you care for your animals? Do you have documentation that proves that you produce beef of the highest quality and safety? Have you wondered about the most current beef production practices?

Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) is a program developed to ensure that beef and dairy cattle are raised in a manner that will result in safe and wholesome beef products for the consumer. Specifically, BQA is designed to enhance quality by preventing drug residues, injection site blemishes and bruises. BQA is valuable to all beef and dairy producers because it:

- Demonstrates a commitment to food safety and quality.
- Safeguards the public image of the beef and dairy industry.
- Upholds consumer confidence in valuable beef products.
- Protects the beef industry from additional and burdensome government regulation.
- Improves sale value of marketed beef cattle.
- Enhances herd profitability through better management.

BQA is a good business practice which can identify potential problem areas in order to avoid product defects. It is of utmost importance that the public has confidence in knowing that beef is a safe product.

Being informed about cattle production standards makes your job as a representative of the beef industry easier. Making a commitment to Beef Quality Assurance is the right thing to do to continue to increase consumer confidence and beef demand.

What does the research say?
Every five years a National Beef Quality Audit is conducted to 1) provide an industry-wide scorecard that gives direction to decision-makers across the industry in order to improve the quality and value of the U.S. beef supply; 2) identify and correct quality shortfalls and non-conformance which will lead to greater profitability through improved demand and 3) help outline the things that can be measured and effectively managed. The highlights from the 2011 National Beef Quality Audit found that the top three challenges were food safety, eating satisfaction and how and where the cattle were raised.

When producers were asked how they intentionally influenced “quality,” the number one method was through animal handling, followed by health management protocols, nutritional programs and following best management practices. Several specific recommendations to reduce barriers and improve beef profitability included 1) implement BQA and demonstrate conformance by having written records, 2) encourage dairy BQA engagement by working together with veterinarians, and 3) document the economic value and market recognition of BQA programs.

As an industry we must do a much better job of telling the beef story. Examples of BQA successes include educational efforts centered around animal welfare, environmental stewardship and low stress handling. Why aren’t all ranchers BQA certified?

A research study conducted in early 2014 had an objective of determining familiarity of the BQA program, perceptions toward BQA guidelines, value of the BQA program to participants and obstacles to BQA participation. The survey was conducted by interviewing 603 cow-calf producers. Ninety percent of cow-calf producers said that following BQA-type guidelines is important while 66 percent said it was very important. Eighty-seven percent of respondents believed that BQA principles added value to their operation.

The key reasons that producers become BQA certified include an enhanced image of beef among consumers, increased consumer confidence and a premium being paid for BQA-certified cattle. Challenges to become certified, as identified by producers, include “being too busy,” “not seeing the need to become certified” on a national basis, only 11 percent of producers have taken BQA training.

Take the time to become certified.
Beef Quality Assurance is an excellent educational program that is offered to cattle producers to share up-to-date and scientifically sound cattle management practices that ensure a safe, wholesome and healthy beef supply.

As a beef producer, you need to be able to answer three questions about your production practices: 1) will this decision affect eating satisfaction? 2) does this decision improve product integrity and customer trust? and 3) will I be proud to make this a part of telling the beef industry’s story?

Thanks to Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica, Inc., BQA Online certification is currently FREE, as long as you sign up by October 31st. To sign up, visit the Animal Care Training website (www.animalcarere training.com) and use the coupon code BIVBQA. There are several training options. Choose the one that best suits you and your operation, or for the most complete overview, select the Comprehensive Beef Quality Assurance training.

If you have any questions please contact Chase DeCoi-te, decoitete@beef.org or 303-858-3369.

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