The Veterinary Link

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Keep the customer in mind

Any businessperson trying to make a profit selling a product must keep his or her customers in mind in all management decisions. The cow-calf producer has two customers to please:

1. the owner of the calves once they leave the ranch, and
2. the beef-eating consumer.

Avoid residues

Once calves leave the ranch, ideally they should adapt quickly to the new environment and ration so that health problems are kept to a minimum and so growth and efficiency are enhanced. Supplying calves that have been properly immunized and adapted to concentrate rations will fulfill the needs of the feeder. Lingering health problems, overconditioning, drug or physical adulteration that will carry through to the beef-eating consumer, and/or injection blemishes that carry through the feeding period are concerns of your feedlot customers.

The beef-eating consumer wants a product that is safe, free from drug residues, free of injection blemishes or abscesses, and flavorful. It is every producer's job to ensure that every steak, hamburger and roast that comes from his or her farm or feedlot can meet the customer's demands. Avoiding drug residues starts with a plan and recordkeeping system that emphasize the proper treatment of disease and identification (ID) of treated animals.

Proper treatment for any disease begins with using the correct drug at

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NCBA national BQA guidelines — (revised August 2001)

Feedstuffs

- Maintain records of any pesticide/herbicide use on pasture or crops that could potentially lead to violative residues in grazing cattle or feedlot cattle.
- Adequate quality control program(s) is in place for incoming feedstuffs. Program(s) should be designed to eliminate contamination from molds, mycotoxins or chemicals of incoming feed ingredients. Supplier assurance of quality feed ingredients is recommended.
- Suspect feedstuffs should be analyzed prior to use.
- Ruminant-derived protein sources cannot be fed per Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations.
- Feeding byproduct ingredients should be supported with sound science.

Feed additives and medications

- Only FDA-approved medicated feed additives will be used in rations.
- Medicated feed additives will be used in accordance with the FDA Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) regulation.
- Follow judicious antibiotic use guidelines.
- Extra-label use of feed additives is illegal and strictly prohibited.
- To avoid violative residues, withdrawal times must be strictly adhered to.
- Where applicable, complete records must be kept when formulating or feeding medicated feed rations.
- Records are to be kept a minimum of two years.
- Operator will assure that all additives are withdrawn at the proper time to avoid violative residues.

Processing/treatment and records

- Following all FDA/U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)/Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines for product(s) utilized.
- All products are to be used per label directions.
- Extra-label drug use shall be kept to a minimum and used only when prescribed by a veterinarian working under a valid veterinary client-patient relationship (VCPR).
- Strict adherence to extended withdrawal periods (as determined by the veterinarian within the context of a valid VCPR) shall be employed.
- Treatment records will be maintained with the following recorded:
  1. Individual animal or group identification (ID)
  2. Date treated
  3. Product administrated and manufacturer's lot/serial number
  4. Dosage used
  5. Route and location of administration and who administered the product
  6. Earliest date animal will have cleared withdrawal period
- When cattle are processed as a group, all cattle within the group shall be identified as such, and the following information recorded:
  1. Group or lot ID
  2. Date treated
  3. Product administered and manufacturer's lot/serial number
  4. Dosage used
  5. Route and location of administration and who administered the product
  6. Earliest date animal will have cleared withdrawal period
- All cattle (fed and non-fed) shipped to harvest will be checked by appropriate personnel to assure that animals have been treated, and meet or exceed label or prescription withdrawal times for all animal health products administered.
- All processing and treatment records should be transferred with the cattle to the next production level. Prospective buyers must be informed of any cattle that have not met withdrawal times.

Injectable animal health products

- Products labeled for subcutaneous (Sub-Q) administration should preferably be administered Sub-Q in the neck region.
- All products labeled for intramuscular (IM) use shall be given in the neck region only (no exceptions, regardless of age).
- All products cause tissue damage when injected IM. Therefore, all IM use should be avoided if possible.
- Products cleared for Sub-Q, intravenous (IV) or oral administration are recommended.
- Products with low dosage rates are recommended, and proper spacing should be followed.
- No more than 10 cc of product is administered per IM injection site.

Care and husbandry practices

- Follow the "Quality Assurance Herd Health Plan" that conforms to good veterinary and husbandry practices.
- All cattle will be handled/transported in such a fashion as to minimize stress, injury and/or bruising.
- Facilities (fences, corrals, loadouts, etc.) should be inspected regularly to ensure proper care and ease of handling.
- Strive to keep feed- and water-handling equipment clean.
- Provide appropriate nutritional and feedstuffs management.
- Strive to maintain an environment appropriate to the production setting.
- Biosecurity should be evaluated.
- Records should be kept for a minimum of two years (three for restricted-use pesticides).

Beef Quality Assurance℠
National Cattlemen's Beef Association

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the correct dosage for the proper length of time. In order to ensure that you are meeting these requirements, a close working relationship with a veterinarian is essential.

A commitment to keeping animals with drug residues off the consumer's plate means identifying and delaying marketing of animals treated with a drug until the proper withdrawal time stated on the label has passed if the drug was used exactly as specified on the label, or for an extended period of time, as determined by your veterinarian, if the product was used in any extra-label fashion.

Avoid injection blemishes

In addition to being assured that the beef they purchase is free of residues, consumers have every right to expect their meat to be free of injection blemishes. By following simple standards of sanitation and animal handling, the incidence of injection-site blemishes should be extremely small.

Animals should be properly restrained, and syringes and other dosing equipment should be clean and functioning properly. Needles should be changed every 10 head, or more frequently if the needle develops a burr or becomes dirty. No more than 10 cc should be administered in any one injection site.

Any product that is labeled for subcutaneous administration should be given by that route. Products labeled for intramuscular administration only should be given in non-prime cuts, such as the neck muscles, utilizing a clean needle.

A well-planned BQA program is designed so that everyday working techniques act to eliminate the potential for problems.

Cattlemen, their employees, veterinarians, nutritionists, and any others involved with the ranch must each examine what could go wrong from their perspective in the delivery of a safe, wholesome and desirable product to the consumer.

Once potential problems are identified, strategies or production practices are put into place to prevent those problems from ever occurring. Methods of recordkeeping, employee training and daily practices are instituted to check, verify and document that you are accomplishing what you intended to do. A well-planned Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) program is designed so that everyday working techniques act to eliminate the potential for problems.

A good place to start when planning your farm's program is with the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) BQA guidelines, available at *www.beefusa.org/prodguidelines.aspx*.

When BQA started in the early 1980s, chemical residues were approximately 1%. Now chemical residues are 0% in fed cattle, and have been for more than a decade. Top rear injection-site lesions were identified in 1991 as a target problem, and since that time the incidence of bruising has been reduced from 22% to less than 6%.

By following management practices that enhance the long-term health of the calves and proper use of drugs, both feedlot and dining customers will be satisfied with the product you supply.