

North Dakota Beef Quality Assurance Program

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Introduction

Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) training sessions have been held throughout North Dakota for the past seven years. These programs are developed to educate beef producers on methods to improve the quality, safety and consistency of beef, resulting in a more consumer-acceptable product. A recertification program has been developed to allow producer to become recertified using a variety of methods, including attending a BQA training session or becoming recertified over the Internet. As well, hands on training sessions have been conducted to educate youth and dairy producer populations on using Beef Quality Assurance practices to improve the quality and safety of beef they produce.

Program Summary and Impacts

As a result of these training sessions, 2,500 operations have been certified, and more than 3,000 cattle producers were educated in beef quality assurance practices. These operations produce more than 549,000 head annually, 55 percent of the state's calves. Comparison of pre- and post-tests taken by participants at each session found an average improvement of 24 percent in test scores. Producers and marketing organizations report a heightened interest in North Dakota BQA certified cattle by alliance programs and feedlots requiring source and age verification and animal health records. These groups have also reported some increased prices for calves certified in the North Dakota BQA Program. To improve the visibility of BQA certified feeder cattle, a "Feeder Fax" website was developed in 2002. This site allows producers to list their feeder calves for sale. Included in the listing is number of cattle, sex, approximate weight, breed composition, past production and carcass data, prevention animal health program, and date and location of sale. The number of cattle listed on this site has increased over the past year.

Producers have reported receiving up a \$7 per hundredweight premium on their feeder cattle because they were certified through the BQA program. As a result of the BQA training program, both county extension agents and veterinarians report a change in producer's behavior in how they administer injections and in their record keeping practices. They report producers are moving their injection site from the hind quarters to the neck, and

are keeping more detailed animal health, husbandry, and production records.

Over 100 dairy producers were educated in Dairy Beef Quality Assurance practices. Surveys indicate dairy producer have changed their injection practices and are improving their record keeping practices to decrease the incidence of antibiotic residues in their market dairy cows.

Further, youth educational programs have been developed and conducted, and as a result over 400 youth have demonstrated the ability to correctly use and administer animal products and accurately keep good herd and animal health records.