

CalfAID - A USDA Process Verified Program

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Cattle identification has received a lot of media coverage these past few months. The coverage has transformed animal identification to more than a hot-button issue and laid the groundwork for a definable program.

The longer a program is discussed, the more time is afforded for workable solutions to resolve the issue. In the case of animal identification, large pieces of application still are floating around with no real connectivity.

One area is surfacing and anchoring itself. The anchor is the USDA Process Verified Program, offered through the Livestock and Seed Program's, Audit, Review and Compliance (ARC) Branch of the Agricultural Marketing Service.

The ARC has set forth procedures that can be followed logically to allow for the approval through the USDA Process Verified Program. The result is solid, defined programs that meet the industry's need to provide source and age verification of beef calves.

Since 1963, the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association has provided beef producers with data processing and the analysis of beef cattle records. The NDBCIA has very strict guidelines for confidentiality, accuracy and timeliness of handling data.

With this strong background in effective beef record-keeping, a natural outcome for the NDBCIA was to dedicate the organization's efforts to meeting the objectives of the USDA Process Verification Program. The NDBCIA received a certificate of conformance. The certificate allows the association's CalfAID to market products under the USDA Process Verified Program for the age and source verification of cattle, electronic animal identification and traceback.

Within the industry, issues still exist. The quagmire may or may not be getting better. The NDBCIA CalfAID program (the only USDA Process Verified Program with North Dakota roots) is one of 21 programs listed as an approved USDA Process Verified Program. Additional programs have opted to utilize the Quality System Assessment (QSA) program, also offered by USDA.

The beef industry is changing, inching toward the future. The bottom line will be in the details and the ability of producers to incorporate the mindset of "verification"

as a day-to-day cattle-marketing term.

As the details are worked out, producer involvement in the NDBCIA CalfAID program is available. Producers can receive participation forms from the NDBCIA office (1133 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601; (701) 483-2045).

Producers need to fill out a producer questionnaire and registration and marketing forms. A copy of the calving record book also is needed.

Upon approval, electronic identification (EID) tags, a tagging tool and EID tag sheets will be dispensed. The EID tags can be picked up in the office or sent through the mail or other courier.

After the calves are tagged, the producer must submit a copy of the EID tag sheet. The calves' visual identification (VID) needs to be listed as a cross reference tag.

Participation in the CalfAID program requires producers to make an investment of \$5 per calf. The return on the investment will be an electronic animal ID, source and age verification through data management and traceback. There are no hidden costs, no additional fees.

The CHAPS program and CHAPS input forms will be supplied back to the producer to assist with the data management, which will be handled at no extra charge by the NDBCIA office.

Traceback on the calves is to the extent possible and involves the utilization of a front team in combination with detailed market planning and individualized producer interaction. Feedlot and carcass performance records are the desired outcomes, but the NDBCIA does not guarantee it can gather the data because last year some feedlots and finish yards cut the tags out. The goal is cooperation with all segments of the industry.

In the end, the calves will be ready to take on the world.

May you find all your NAIS-approved ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at www.BeefTalk.com. For more information, contact the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to www.CHAPS2000.com on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0271.



Electronic Animal ID

**Source & Age
Verification Through
Data Management**

Traceback