

Reality Hits Hard

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The complexity and ramifications of the current processes involved in marketing beef are starting to surface. The calves are doing fine, the beef supply is as healthy as ever, but the paperwork is a mixed bag of yes, no or maybe.

The challenge producers face is concentrating on the ramifications of doing business in an absolute, no-exceptions environment. Know what you are signing. Understand that determining for the life of the calf, the place of birth, the date of birth and the journey the calf walked from birth to slaughter is not going to be taken lightly.

Leave the good ol' cowboy jokes in the barn. The world is taking on a very serious tone.

One thing just became perfectly clear. The ramifications of wrong, even though well meaning or misinformed, are still wrong. A name, place and date are quickly attached to any violation for cattle moving through the marketing channels.

No one wants to be singled out and placed in a position of justification after the fact. The scenario usually results in fewer friends at the table.

In the past, producers managed cattle as a herd or pen, and, for the most part, producers have attended educational meetings much as they manage cattle. If the understanding of the group passed, the meeting was successful. After all, producers often rely on other producers to forward along needed information.

Keeping informed is a struggle, but the struggle is not getting any easier. Most meetings quickly become a set of notes that probably took in most of the meeting. The details come later.

Following the recent news of a shipping violation involving beef exported to Japan, I reviewed the notes from one of the many early meetings to help recap what was said and how the process was to work.

In summary, the essence of the meeting said, "QSA requirements set the procedures and requirements for export to Japan. Companies must address 1030J procedure. Packer approval needed, age verification is nec-

essary along with individual identification. The type of identification may be specified by program, but the animals must be traceable to birth date records, e.g., a Dec. 15 harvest date, March 16 birth date required. Beef needs to be traced, period. Cattle must be traceable to individual or group age and source verification. Calves can be carcass verified through A40. Canadian cattle can be enrolled. One-time use ear tags, ISO standards and feedlots can develop their own programs through PVP and QSA programs. Documentation can be simply through the specific EV (Export Verification) for Japan. A40 carcass evaluation is permissible. An affidavit signed by the producer will not meet the requirements. Fabrications not up yet, but will be the next round of audits." End of notes.

A very typical set of notes, but not enough depth to completely understand the approaching program. Ironically, no questions were asked. An old and alive message is that the world changed.

It is important to keep in mind domestic beef production is alive and well. Not all calves need to be source and age verified now. It is better to wait and do the processes right, rather than punt, sign the forms and hope for a little marketing edge.

The bottom line is to get those calves tagged this spring at birth and write down the date of birth. If not at birth, sometime before marketing, tag the calf with an electronic ID to prepare the calf for market.

For now, grab a good calving book, a good pen, bag of ear tags and applicator, and start tagging. If you don't have a good calving book, let me know and I will send you one.

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 BT0284.

NDSU CALVING BOOK

**Copies are available from the North Dakota
Beef Cattle Improvement Association.**

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