

Verify Is a Verb, Which Means Action

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The smell of fall is in the air. The seasonal change means one thing to the beef producer: The annual roundup is approaching. The calves will be gathered and weaned. There are different management systems and each system has different objectives and outcomes. One outcome for sure is that something is going to happen.

Some of my thoughts result from a comment made at the Dickinson Research Extension Center's weekly CalfAID meeting. CalfAID is a USDA Process Verified Program (PVP) and producers are asking questions as to how to integrate these newer concepts of source- and age-verified calves into their marketing programs.

Source and age verification is a lifelong process that begins at birth and continues through harvest. Like a relay race, the baton (EID tag) must be passed (read) at each point or the process fails. No one wins unless the race is finished.

I recently attended the National Institute for Animal Agriculture annual conference. A full range of information on establishing a national animal identification system was provided.

The appropriate comparison would be similar to climbing a mountain. All the valleys and ravines are not known until the journey commences, but the mountain peak still looms and the climbers are still climbing. This relevancy to producers today is very real.

We are all climbing on that mountain, even if we don't want to be. We need to be aware of the environment in which the cattle business is operating. As calves are being prepared for market, we must realize the statement "age and source verified" is a continual and verifiable process.

Currently, most are video sales where calves are purchased today with a specified delivery date later this fall. The point that needs to be remembered is that age and source verification is a process that starts at the birth of the calf and eventually ends with the harvest of the calf or even later with the cow or bull.

The electronic identification tag, commonly called

an EID, is the connecting link from birth to harvest. The verification part of the process is continuous. At any point along the way, the electronic ID needs to have the capacity to be read and the appropriate information transferred somewhere for storage. Each individual calf or each individual calf within a defined group of calves, depending on what program the producer is involved with, must be conforming in regard to the requirements of the program.

As individual calves, or groups of calves, are placed on the market as age and source verified, these rules cannot change. It is imperative for producers to be ready to assist in the process of verifying each calf to provide an absolute assurance that all the calves are conforming and there are no nonconforming calves.

A nonconforming calf is a calf that never met the appropriate criteria or did so at one point in time, but due to lost information or tags, the calf can no longer be age and source verified. There can be no exceptions to this point.

Simply gathering calves and loading the truck will not be good enough. The calves in the truck must match the list that accompanies the load. The calves that are unloaded must match the list of calves that arrived. The calves that arrived must match the list of calves on feed, and on and on and on. All calves are verifiable at all points. Anything else simply leads to confusion and ultimately finger pointing at the original source.

Yes, the mountains are high and the ravines low. No one else is going to climb the mountain. There are no shortcuts, so keep track of your tags, load up and head out.

May you find all your 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 BT0315.

No One Wins Unless the Race is Finished

The age and source verification of a calf is just like a relay, the baton must be passed at each point or the process fails.

