

Paperwork Without Trust is Environmentally Unsound

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Each week begins with a certain amount of expectation. This Monday was typical: full of this and that. Everyone is anxious to get the week started, to finish the carry-over from last week and face the challenges of a new week.

Positive outcomes for the week starts with good management. Management can be defined many ways, but the key to successful outcomes of ideas is an organization to execute them. Without an effective organization, you have nothing.

Successful organizations involve a very high level of trust, much like a winning basketball team. Trust effectively moves the ball from player to player and eventually to the goal. Ineffective organizations never seem to really get the fluid motion going.

Most of us can relate to the motion of good or bad days. During the good days, things seem to move along and work out. It may be difficult to pin-point the reason, but the day gets done with no snags. On bad days, this jog, that jag, a bump there, a dip here causes much questioning and doubting as nothing seems to come together.

Fundamentally, much of what we face in the beef industry today, as in all the things we do, is the expansion of our day to day decisions. When my grandfather homesteaded, if he didn't trust his roommate, nothing got done. All permanent progress evolved by trusting those around you for the benefit of all. Occasionally, an ill fated dishonest plan was connived, but society as a whole dealt with those issues by assembling a dozen locally trusted people to pass judgment.

Today's business challenge involves establishing trust over time and distance. In the beef industry, expansion has occurred to the point where local knowledge and "good old" trust is sometimes lacking. So what do we do? Well, for the beef industry, we start to see things like the creation of a "Country of Origin Labeling" law.

In many other businesses, as well as the beef business, trust has been replaced by paper. I really don't believe Grandpa ever signed a triplicate form, and certainly would not have appreciated electronic signatures. In Grandpa's

world you did business with those you trusted and signed the deal with a handshake. A signature was only required from those you didn't trust and were not part of your local community.

At the North Dakota State University Dickinson Research Extension Center, our beef is served literally to the world. Where all the harvested products eventually end up is mind boggling. So how do we manage such an effort, when the present organizational efforts are all based on a fundamental lack of trust and no local identity?

We worked calves last week, calves that will enter the trade a year from now. How do we source-verify these calves and communicate the health and well being of these calves to non-local people who may not trust what we do?

To date the calves have been ear tagged, branded, the male calves castrated, the horned calves dehorned. All calves received an Ultrabac 7/Somubac (Serial #S022004B, Exp. Date June 15, 2003) vaccination. The cows were vaccinated with PregGuard FP 9 (Serial #A242138/A236779, Exp. Date June 16, 2004, Lot #1246128A) in preparation for the breeding season.

This data is accumulated in the Cow Herd Appraisal Performance Software (CHAPS) database so we can access it immediately. This is the beginning of a source verification program that will document everything known about each individual animal conceived, grown, bred and eventually marketed from the DREC herd.

These simple management practices are easy to implement. The process of communicating to the world what was done will be made easier with records documentation but the point could be asked if it is even possible. Accomplishing that is possible but labor intensive.

Yet, for now, paper is still just paper, and without trust, remains paper. 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 BT0141.

Status of Calves Born in 2003*

NDSU Dickinson Research Extension Center

Management Practices Applied

Ear Tagged, Branded, Dehorned, Castrated

Vaccination Records

April 22, 2003

Ultrabac 7/Somubac, Serial # S002004B, Exp. Date 6/15/03

* Data for source verification