

What Happened to the Calving Book?

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A very popular activity during the winter months is handing out calving books. In fact, if one quits handing out books, one will find some very distraught cattle producers.

Given the intensity and desire expressed by cattle producers, the calving book is a critical part of the beef operation. The issue can be pushed even harder. Reprint the calving books slightly differently than the previous edition and one will receive many comments that they liked it the way it was.

Given those observations and the fact that cattle ear tag companies are still in business and seem to be doing well, one may assume a significant number of calves are tagged and recorded at birth. Hold that thought for a moment.

The demand for age- and source-verified calves is increasing. The consternation level gets rather high when producers, asked if their calves are age- and source-verified, can only respond by saying no. The consternation turns to frustration as buyers walk away unable to fill their orders for age- and source-verified calves, even when they have extra dollars to purchase the calves.

What are we missing? Opportunities are walking away and producers are missing the mark.

Let's return to the point about whatever happened to the calving book. The calving book continues to be in great demand, but yet a great disconnect between this book and the current issue facing cattle producers seems to exist.

The point is this: If a producer actually utilized the calving book by tagging the calves at birth and noting the birth in the calving book, those calves are age- and source-verified. The only point remaining is the verification of the calving book.

As with many things, especially within an industry as dynamic and large as the beef industry, it is easy to get confused, especially when common production points are intermingled with the demands of the marketing world. Most days are like a large trade show; booth

after booth has the best plan for your operation. By the time one actually gets through listening to all the programs being offered, the only real point is that one is confused.

Think through the basics. For those producers using a calving book, the first step is done. Age and source verification starts with individually identifying calves at birth and recording that information in the calving book. It is that simple.

Next, a producer only needs to select a particular program that offers verification of the data collected. For example, if one was to utilize CalfAID or a similar program, the general steps are to individually identify calves at birth (visual or electronic identification), complete the calving book, enroll the herd in CalfAID or a similar USDA Process Verified Program (PVP) or Quality Systems Assessment (QSA) and submit the completed calving book (photocopy, digital photos or printed forms) as required to obtain a verification document for marketing.

Most programs will require the calves to be electronically identified (EID). If this is not done at birth, calves will need to be EID tagged prior to leaving the farm or ranch. Individual EIDs will need to be cross referenced with the calf's visual identification and the information provided to the program of choice, such as CalfAID or selected USDA PVP or QSA programs.

The question and point is what happened to those calving books. Granted, there is a group of programs available, but if a producer already has a calving book, the big and first step is done. Use it. If you don't know how to use it, copy and send it to the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association. We will help you bring your calving book to life.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>. For more information, contact the NDB-CIA Office, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601, or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.

CHECKLIST

For Age and Source Verification

- 1. All records must be legible, auditable and verifiable
- 2. Individually identify animal at birth (visual or electronic identification)
- 3. Complete calving book
- 4. Enroll herd in CalfAID or similar USDA Process Verified Program (PVP) or Quality Systems Assessment (QSA)
- 5. Submit completed calving book (photocopy or digital photos) as required by CalfAID or selected program
- 6. Calves must have an electronic identification and visual identification required by CalfAID or selected USDA PVP or QSA
- 7. Obtain verification document for marketing