

## The National Cattlemen's Beef Association Commitment to Animal Care

Cattlemen have long recognized the need to properly care for livestock. Beef cattle producers take pride in their responsibility to provide proper care to cattle. They have, in many cases passed on animal care principles from generation to generation. Personal experience, training and professional judgment all serve as valuable resources for providing this care.

Research has provided additional information that can supplement experience and in the quest for continual improvement in the cattle industry, research provides the basis for many day-to-day decisions about animal husbandry. Sound animal husbandry practices, based on decades of practical experience and research, are known to impact the well-being of cattle, individual animal health and herd productivity. Therefore management programs should be science-based and common-sense driven. As such, the cattle industry continues their commitment to proper care and handling of their livestock.

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) has several initiatives aimed at combining sound animal husbandry practices. These are based on decades of practical experience and research and the most up to date science and education, in order to assure animal health and well-being as well as provide a safe, quality product.

1. **The Beef Quality Assurance Program (BQA)** was established in 1987 to provide cattle producers with the principles and tools to use every day to ensure animals are given proper care and attention. BQA unites producers with experts (animal scientists, veterinarians, feed suppliers, animal health companies, meatpackers, retailers and state and federal regulators) to develop management programs using the latest science and technology to assure proper animal care, beef quality and safety. BQA incorporates current Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations as well as Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles. Today, BQA influences more than ninety percent of U.S. cattle.

Cattlemen become certified when they meet criteria for quality and beef production set forth in the BQA guidelines. Producers undergo continuous training to remain certified. The BQA Manual is the overarching guideline that provides consistency across the nation, but states can go beyond national standards to meet state needs and opportunities. Most states have individual BQA programs that are tailored to the needs of their particular state beef industry, and can offer their own certification standards. State certification requirements vary, but may include third party verification and testing procedures to ensure good management practices.

In the interest of developing effective national standards, two new initiatives have been implemented. The BQA Train the Trainer Program is designed to provide an effective standardized approach to training extension, allied industry, and other other personnel who provide BQA training and educational programming to producers. This effort provides an important dimension of consistency through provision of a formal curriculum and training process. The second new initiative is the rollout of

the National Feedyard Assessment program in early 2009. The assessment tool integrates the excellent programs offered by TCFA, KLA, and other affiliates into a national program that offers a continuous improvement effort that can be communicated across the industry regardless of state affiliation.

On top of the NCBA program and state BQA programs, other organizations can offer quality assurance programs, such as the certification provided by the Texas Cattle Feeders Association (TCFA). The TCFA program includes a third-party review and annual audit by a veterinarian or nutritionist to ensure criteria are met for nutrition, disease prevention, identification, and adequate shelter and housing.

Today, **BQA influences more than ninety percent of U.S. cattle.** Approximately 185,000 copies of the brochure of the attached Care and Handling Guidelines have been sent to producers, veterinarians, Departments of Agriculture, and Universities. BQA is not a static program. An advisory board made up of cattle producers, beef and dairy veterinarians, university and extension scientists, meat scientists, and auction markets and the transportation industry owners, among others, continually works to update and strengthen the program. State BQA Coordinators meet annually to report on their individually tailored state programs, share information, evaluate successes and identify areas of improvement. The BQA national strategic plan demonstrated the need for unity of BQA programs across the nation. The first step in this was to create a comprehensive nationally standardized BQA manual to “train the trainer”. University and veterinary experts created and reviewed this manual as well as other experts in specific BQA areas. The manual is completed and is expected to be approved in July 2008. For more information on BQA please go to [www.BQA.org](http://www.BQA.org)

NCBA’s BQA Program is broader than just on-farm management of beef cattle: it also has aspects regarding livestock markets and transportation of cattle, as well as a Dairy Beef Quality Assurance (DBQA) component.

- The **BQA Auction Market DVD (“Focal Point”)** was developed by BQA and the Livestock Marketing Association (LMA). 1600 of these DVD’s were distributed by LMA to markets across the country in March 2008 and this tool has been heavily used by the NCBA Livestock Marketing Council (LMC) (NCBA’s membership of market owners) to train their employees. Currently LMA is working with NCBA BQA to conduct follow up hands-on training and help state BQA coordinators gain access to auction markets for producer training opportunities. We are also working to have live trainings by the experts featured in the video at LMC auction markets. The Auction Market DVD is also being translated into Spanish.
- The **Master Cattle Transporter Guide** for cattle transporters is part of the BQA initiative. Transportation quality assurance plays a critical role in the health and welfare of cattle. The proper handling and transport of cattle can reduce sickness in calves, prevent bruises, and improve the quality of the meat from these animals. The NCBA Master Cattle Transporter Guide covers properly moving cattle up to and on to the trailer, distributing cattle correctly on the trailer, hauling techniques that reduce cattle stress and handling emergency situations. It consists of a manual that will fit in a glove-box as well as a 45 minute video training on a

- DVD disc. Translation into Spanish is planned. The Master Cattle Transporter Guide development was a large endeavor that utilized the expertise of animal handling and transport consultants, producers, auction operators, feedyard managers, packer representatives and University researchers/experts. To learn more about the program, go to [www.tbqa.org](http://www.tbqa.org).
- Stock Trailer Transportation guidelines and DVD has also been developed and are being distributed via both web-based and hard copy brochures designed to provide producers effective standards for cattle transport in farm owned vehicles as opposed to commercial transport.
  - NCBA has made a concerted effort the past two years to improve and develop a more robust **NCBA Dairy BQA (DBQA)** and have worked at developing relationships with key dairy organizations and industry leaders. In the summer of 2007, BQA was able to create working relationships with National Dairy Herd Improvement Association (NDHIA) (which has ~52% of dairy producers as members) and the Dairy Calf & Heifer Association (members are dairy calf ranches that develop calves for dairies and feedyards). We will also be delivering materials to dairy producers through DCHA and NDHIA's producer communication programs. Ongoing efforts are underway to strengthen, expand and improve our DBQA, working with NCBA members who are in the dairy industry, as well as other organized dairy industry groups. This includes education and outreach. For example, NDHIA is working with NCBA's BQA program to develop tools for dairy producers, including expected progeny differences (a genetic evaluation) that address soundness and feet and leg issues to improve the structure of the dairy animal along with training of members on DBQA. For more information on DBQA please visit: [www.DBQA.com](http://www.DBQA.com)
  - Measurement of progress to improve conformance to quality standards is key to the successful implementation of BQA in the beef and dairy industries. To that end the industry conducted national quality audits of the fed beef supply in 1991, 1995, 2000, and 2005 and national audits of the nonfed beef supply in 1994, 1999, and 2007. These audits enabled the industry to develop benchmarks relative to factors affecting quality, yield, and value while formulating strategies and tactics to make measurable progress towards quality improvements. The results of these audits have been useful in helping the industry to maintain a disciplined focus on continuous improvement in accordance with total quality management principles.
  - The most recent innovation in the BQA effort is the National Feedyard Quality Assessment program. Based on successful state initiatives, the program is designed to create a standardized auditable system that allows feedyards to monitor progress towards quality standards. The creation of a standardized system creates a seamless and transparent means for supply chain participants to assure adherence to quality based standards.
  - **The Quality Assurance Marketing Code of Ethics** demonstrates cattle producer's ethical philosophy regarding the marketing of our cattle and is the following:

*I will only participate in marketing cattle that:  
Do not pose a known public health threat*

*Have cleared proper withdrawal times*  
*Do not have a terminal condition (including advanced lymphosarcoma, septicemia, etc.)*  
*Are not disabled*  
*Are not severely emaciated*  
*Do not have uterine/vaginal prolapses with visible fetal membranes*  
*Do not have advanced eye lesions*  
*Do not have advanced lumpy jaw*  
*Furthermore, I will:*  
*Do everything possible to humanely gather, handle, and transport cattle in accordance with accepted animal husbandry practices.*  
*Finally I will:*  
*Humanely euthanize cattle when necessary to prevent suffering and to protect public health.*

2. In 1996 NCBA developed **The Producer Code for Cattle Care** as an additional resource for U.S. producers in their efforts to raise healthy cattle and help with their commitment to proper care and handling of their livestock. In 2003 cattle producer leaders worked with animal health and well-being experts to create an expanded version of the code, entitled **The Cattle Industry's Guidelines for the Care and Handling of Cattle**. While there is not one specific set of production practices that can be recommended for all cattle producers, these guidelines provide a basis for care and handling. NCBA's Cattle Care Working Group developed these guidelines with a significant amount of input and discussions with veterinarians, animal scientists, agricultural engineers and animal well-being experts. The guidelines were adopted by the NCBA Executive Committee, Cattle Health and Well-being Committee and the Beef Quality Assurance Program in 2004, and are a part of the BQA program. These guidelines are also endorsed by the Academy of Veterinary Consultants, the American Association of Bovine Practitioners, the Food Marketing Institute and the National Council of Chain Restaurants.

The guidelines address the following areas: feeding and nutrition, appropriate to the type of cattle; disease prevention practices and health care; identification; shelter and housing; handling; marketing; emergency procedures; transportation, including emergencies; non-ambulatory cattle; euthanasia; heat stress procedures, including feedlot cattle as well as pasture cattle; training and education for maintaining and improving cattle care; and handling implementation and review programs, including self-evaluation for cattle producers. Below are the general cattle care recommendations. The full Guidelines are attached.

### **The Code of Cattle Care General Recommendations:**

1. Provide necessary food, water, and care to protect the health and well-being of animals.

2. Provide disease prevention practices to protect herd health, including access to veterinary care.
3. Provide facilities that allow safe, humane and efficient movement and/or restraint of cattle.
4. Use appropriate methods to humanely euthanize terminally sick or injured livestock and dispose of them properly.
5. Provide personnel with training/experience to properly handle and care for cattle.
6. Make timely observations of cattle to ensure basic needs are being met.
7. Minimize stress when transporting cattle.
8. Keep updated on advancements and changes in the industry to make decisions based upon sound production practices and consideration for animal well-being.
9. Persons who willfully mistreat animals will not be tolerated.

3. NCBA also has a **Producers Guide for Judicious Use of Antibiotics**, which was adapted from the American Veterinary Medical Association, American Association of Bovine Practitioners and the Academy of Veterinary Consultants' Appropriate Antibiotic Use Guidelines and have been in place since 1987. The guidelines specifically outline the appropriate use of antibiotics. Some key points are:

1. Avoid using antibiotics that are important in human medicine.
2. Use a narrow spectrum of antimicrobials whenever possible.
3. Treat the fewest number of animals possible.
4. Antibiotic use should be limited to prevent or control disease and should not be used if the principle intent is to improve performance.