

## Be Proactive with BQA

Consumers have concerns about how their food is produced. These concerns lead to questions directed toward the restaurants and retail outlets where they purchase their food. In turn, those companies pass questions to food suppliers such as National Beef Packing Company (NBP).

The vast majority of beef producers do an excellent job of caring for their animals and producing a safe, healthy product in an ethical manner with concern regarding animal welfare. However, today's food marketing efforts require more than just a general statement to verify claims to reassure consumers who are further from the food production sector than ever before.

**The Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) program** has been developed and implemented by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) for some time now. This program has been in place to be the formal training of "the right things to do" for beef producers. This educational program has provided training to key individual employees who can then return to their feedyard, train coworkers and go through a self-assessment process of comparing their practices to what was covered in the BQA training. This is what's commonly referred to as becoming "BQA certified" or "BQA approved".

As a next step, NCBA is developing the BQA Feedyard Assessment database. This will allow for a listing of all feedyards that have become BQA approved. It will be a voluntary program for feedyards to complete the BQA training, conduct a self-assessment and then

agree to have their feedyard listed. This database will be available to processors via a password protected website to allow beef processors like NBP to better educate meat customers of the number of feedyards that have been BQA approved and the percentage of their cattle supply that are produced utilizing these good management practices from BQA approved feedlots. This should help assure consumers and maintain beef demand.

**According to Art Wagner, VP of Procurement** for NBP, “The number of questions and inquiries about the production practices of our suppliers has increased exponentially over the last few years. We want to address these questions and reassure consumers with not just implied participation but factual supplier participation in using best management practices. The BQA program provides a documented, industry-based assurance that our cattle suppliers are focused on providing a safe, healthy product in an ethical manner. It allows us to be much more proactive instead of reactive.”

Therefore, USPB and NBP would like to encourage all of our feedyards to participate. To be listed on the Feedyard Assessment Database, a feedyard must:

- 1. Have at least one key employee complete BQA training.** This is available online at [www.animalcaretraining.org](http://www.animalcaretraining.org). Some states also offer training materials on CD from your state BQA coordinator. Then, all employees should be trained in their respective area of responsibilities.

- 2. Complete the BQA Feedyard Assessment.** This can be conducted by feedyard employees or the yard’s veterinarian. Personnel at the

Beef Cattle Institute at Kansas State University are also available to assist or conduct the assessment within Kansas. Contact Kelly Oliver at [kjoliver@vet.k-state.edu](mailto:kjoliver@vet.k-state.edu) or call 785-532-4844 for more information. The assessment is to be completed every three years.

**3.** Contact your state BQA coordinator to verify the feedyard has completed training and the assessment and to provide their approval to be listed in the database. For a list of state BQA coordinators and their contact information, visit [www.bqa.org/statebqa.aspx](http://www.bqa.org/statebqa.aspx).

Online training is only \$25 per person and there is no fee for participating in the Assessment Database. Please call 866-877-2525, if you have questions. ♦