

# Texas Beef Quality Producer *Program*



Managing cattle  
for the kind of beef  
you want your kids to eat.



**For Cow-Calf and Stocker Operators**

A cooperative program by Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association,  
Texas Beef Council and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service



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# Introduction

**A**s a Texas food producer, your livelihood depends on securing the trust of your consumers. Food safety – or the perception of it – plays a major role in the buying decisions of health-conscious Americans all across the country. Fortunately for cattle producers, the public generally perceives beef as a safe and wholesome product. However, there is no such thing as “too” safe when it comes to the food consumers buy for themselves – and their children. After all, the beef you produce is a product that somebody will eat.

Add to that reality the ever-increasing competition for the consumer’s protein dollar, and you quickly see how crucial it is for cattle producers of all sizes in every segment to commit to a management strategy that inspires consumer confidence in the safety of beef products.

In addition to safety, factors affecting cattle quality – and food quality – are also important. At the consumer level, quality attributes such as tenderness, flavor and portion size are important. At the production level, we are concerned with things like performance, health and predictability all through the system.

In both cases, these quality factors can be affected by management decisions throughout the production chain – including your management decisions at the cow-calf or stocker level.

Furthermore, consumers have become more environmentally conscious. They are more closely scrutinizing agricultural practices that affect air and water quality and animal welfare. Although these factors may or may not *directly* affect the safety and quality of beef, they impact public *perceptions* of the beef industry, which may alter consumer acceptance of beef products.



*... the beef you produce is a product that somebody will eat.*

The beef industry is evolving into vertically coordinated (vs. integrated) production systems, which require all segments – from the cow-calf producer to the consumer – to communicate and share information to (1) assure that beef is safe and wholesome, (2) increase the efficiency of production and (3) enhance environmental quality.

Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) is a proven system of sensible management practices that will further strengthen consumer confidence in beef products. Adopting BQA principles is a proactive way to implement a philosophy of Total Quality Management (TQM) into your beef operation and address quality and safety issues.

BQA can also help you become more competitive as a producer. Your active participation in this program is beneficial to building up the world's image of beef originating from the Lone Star State.

This Texas Cow-Calf and Stocker Beef Safety and Quality Assurance Handbook was developed for use in the Texas Beef Quality Producer (TBQP) program to provide a TQM framework specifically for cow-calf and stocker producers. The information in this handbook and the instruction and support you'll receive throughout the training sessions will help you identify critical points in your beef production business that influence safety and quality. The TBQP guidelines are aligned with national BQA guidelines set forth by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

The program requires everyone involved with beef production to follow regulatory guidelines for product use and to use the *Best Management Practices* (BMPs) outlined in this handbook, which are based on accepted scientific knowledge, to ensure safety and quality from the producer to the consumer.

*Every domestic agricultural producer contributes to the safest, most wholesome food supply in the world and is obligated to share their personal story of quality assurance and stewardship.*

# *The History of* **Beef Quality Assurance**

**I**n the early 1960s, Pillsbury, NASA and the U.S. Army Natick Laboratories cooperatively developed a revolutionary quality control program. Its objectives were to ensure food safety on NASA missions and to reduce the chance of product defects entering the food chain.

Their program, the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) system, gained U.S. Department of Agriculture acceptance and is presently the dominant outline for safety assurance programs in processed and fresh foods. HACCP plans are simply prevention plans that identify and control potential foods hazards and monitor the production process.

To take a proactive approach to managing production practices, cattle producers began investigating ways to ensure that their production practices were safe and would pass scrutiny of the consumer. In 1982, USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) began working with the U.S. beef industry to develop the Pre-harvest Beef Safety Production Program.

Between 1982 and 1985, three feedlots cooperated with FSIS to evaluate production practices and assess residue risks. In 1985, after careful analysis and adjustment of production practices, these three feedlots were certified by FSIS as "Verified Production Control" feedlots. What was learned during those three years now serves as the backbone for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) Beef Quality Assurance program. (Guidelines for the NCBA program are

***To take a proactive approach to managing production practices, cattle producers began investigating ways to ensure that their production practices were safe and would pass scrutiny of the consumer.***

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presented in the Appendix on page 99.)

This *voluntary* program has clearly been successful. BQA practices have almost eliminated violations associated with chemical residues and significantly reduced injection site lesions in fed beef cattle (steers and heifers fed in a feedyard). Cull breeding cattle provide approximately 15 to 20% of total beef production. Therefore, management practices to prevent residues and injection site lesions should be adopted.

In the 1990s, USDA mandated that all packing and processing plants develop and implement HACCP programs. To date, similar mandatory regulations do not exist for preharvest segments of the beef industry. However, in order to provide a safe, nutritious and wholesome product without government regulation, industry groups have developed voluntary safety and quality assurance programs for the production segments of the industry.

For example, in 1986, the Texas Cattle Feeders Association initiated the first state BQA program in the country. In recent years, the TCFA program has grown to incorporate HACCP principles to address safety concerns and further address quality issues by identifying quality control points within the feedyard management system. It has paved the way toward ensuring the safety and quality of fed cattle in their members' control.

With all of this in mind, the Texas Beef Quality Producer program has been developed to assist Texas cow-calf and stocker operators with developing BQA management strategies to ensure the safety and quality of beef from cattle they produce.

***Cull breeding cattle provide approximately 15 to 20 percent of total beef production.***



# Why Get Involved?

Other segments of the industry, from feedyards to foodservice, have already adopted HACCP and BQA management principles. And to further ensure the safety of products leaving their operations, whether that product is fed cattle or case-ready meat products, these companies are looking to do business with cow-calf producers and stocker operators who utilize the same management philosophy.



By adopting BQA principles as a way of doing business, you are positioning your operation to take advantage of these opportunities. Making a commitment to Beef Quality Assurance is the right thing to do to continue to increase consumer confidence and beef demand.

Participating in the Texas Beef Quality Producer program is one way to show our customers, whether they are calf buyers or consumers, that Texas cattle producers take every step possible to raise beef

for them responsibly. Furthermore, every aspect of a BQA program is part of good business management.

For example, the information gained from record keeping in your BQA program will help you make better business decisions and avoid making costly production mistakes. BQA may also be an important resource for producers who are confronted with additional government regulation and/or possible litigation.

***Making a commitment to Beef Quality Assurance is the right thing to do to continue to increase consumer confidence and beef demand.***

# What Is Quality?

“Quality” can be defined in different ways. One definition is “providing products that meet or exceed expectations and established requirements every time.” Obviously, in the beef industry, established product requirements differ among the various production segments, but there are some common expectations.

For example, the products of a commercial cow-calf operation are weaned calves and cull breeding cattle. Calves should meet the requirements for performance, health and carcass characteristics that satisfy stocker operators and cattle feeders. Cull breeding cattle must meet requirements of non-fed beef processors for health, food safety and expectations for carcass characteristics.

As products of a stocker operation, feeder cattle should meet requirements of finishing operations for performance, health, carcass characteristics and food safety. Finished cattle must meet requirements of beef processors for health, carcass characteristics and food safety. Commodity beef products must meet requirements of beef purveyors for fat trim, marbling, portion size, safety and lack of defects, such as injection site blemishes and dark cutters.

## **Beef products must meet expectations for both safety and eating satisfaction.**

The bottom line is quality goes far beyond the parameters of food safety. Quality encompasses performance, health, carcass characteristics and eating satisfaction, which are all affected by management decisions throughout the beef production system. Because factors other than food safety are involved in quality, the material in this handbook is oriented toward the Total Quality Management concept.



# *The* **TEXAS** **BEEF QUALITY** **PRODUCER** *program*

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## **What is the objective?**

The objective of the Texas Beef Quality Producer program is to ensure that cattle and beef products originating from Texas cow-calf and stocker operations are safe and wholesome, meet requirements for quality throughout the production system, and are produced with humane and environmentally sound production practices.

This curriculum encompasses (1) traditional BQA principles to address food safety issues (2) management decisions affecting health, performance and carcass characteristics, and (3) issues related to beef production and environmental quality.

# The Basic Ideas Behind Total Quality Management (TQM)

At the ranch level, Total Quality Management (TQM) is as simple as creating a plan to prevent problems or to deal with something that doesn't go according to plan, for example, a needle breaking off inside a calf while giving an injection. The principles of TQM are incorporated in the discussions throughout the handbook.

Although specific reference to these principles is not always made, the concept is implemented by identifying and monitoring control points, preventive measures, safe limits, and corrective actions.

A core concept of TQM is W. Edwards Deming's 14 points, management practices to help companies increase their quality and productivity. The following 9 concepts have been modified from Deming's list and adapted to the TBQP program

1. Create constancy of purpose for improving management and products from the ranch
2. Adopt the Texas Beef Quality Producer TQM philosophy
3. Build quality rather than relying on the next segment to sort out problems
4. Constantly monitor and improve planning and production
5. Take advantage of educational opportunities for self improvement
6. Adopt and institute leadership on the ranch to implement the TQM philosophy
7. Encourage open communication (on the ranch and across the industry)
8. Encourage quality and pride of workmanship rather than focusing on speed of completion
9. Expect everybody (from the owner to contract labor) involved in ranch operations to implement the Texas Beef Quality Producer program



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Based on these 9 concepts, 5 key action steps of the TBQP program are:

**1) Examine current management practices**

As with any industry trying to build or improve a production system, points in the production chain where problems could arise must be anticipated; such points are called “control points”. To improve our production system we must examine what we are doing by identifying the interactions (i.e. control points) we have with an animal that might compromise beef quality or environmental integrity.

**2) Implement procedures to ensure production of cattle that will result in a safe, wholesome beef product**

For example, everyone who helps you work cattle should be instructed to avoid giving intramuscular (IM) injections anywhere but the neck. IM injections given in the hip at branding have been shown to cause injection site blemishes identifiable in the steaks from that animal, and it toughens the meat adjacent to the injection site. Corrective actions should also be established in the event a problem occurs. As an example, corrective actions for a drug residue violation might include improved record keeping and employee training.

**3) Establish a relationship between the ranch and veterinarian**

Work with your veterinarian to develop a preventative herd health plan. This preventative herd health plan should be reviewed with your veterinarian on a regular basis and updated according to any changes on your operation or with product availability.

**4) Keep records to monitor and verify**

Establish effective record keeping procedures that document the system is working properly. For example, using a processing map to record where each injection was given, how much was given, how it was given, and the product administered is a way to verify your treatment protocol.

**5) Pursue additional BQA training and monitor ranch activities**

A periodic review of your animal treatment records, production practices, critical limits, treatment protocols, etc. is a way to verify that your management strategies are being carried out according to your BQA plan.

***TQM Focus***

- 1. Food safety control points***
- 2. Quality control points***
- 3. Environmental control points***
- 4. Animal handling and well being***

