

Beef Quality Assurance: The Future of Beef Marketing

What is Beef Quality Assurance or BQA? It is a national programme that provides guidelines for beef cattle production in the US, explains Joi Saville, beef extension associate at Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension.

This programme helps to raise consumer confidence and awareness through offering proper management techniques and a commitment to quality within every segment of the beef industry.

Producers have embraced BQA because it is the right thing to do; but they have also gained through increased profitability. As an educational programme, BQA helps producers identify management processes that can be improved.

So, the question remains: How does this affect cattle producers in Virginia? Well, through a state-wide initiative, Extension – with the support and partnership of the Virginia Beef Industry Council – has undergone an extensive training process with their agents to provide cattle producers with the opportunity to become a BQA-certified producer, or become re-certified in BQA.

On 8 June this year, Virginia Cooperative Extension hosted a training seminar for extension agents across the state to become knowledgeable in the ways of BQA, as well as provide to experienced BQA agents a re-certification of these processes. Extension agents are knowledgeable about BQA practices and can work with small groups of producers to become BQA-certified.

“When better quality cows leave the farm and reach the market place, the producer, packer and consumer all benefit. Packers benefit when they have less trim, fewer condemnations and more high quality cuts of beef to send to their customers. When packers benefit, they pay more and discount less for the higher quality market cows coming through the auction markets and buying stations. When better quality beef reaches the supermarket, consumers are more confident in the beef they are buying, and this increases beef consumption,” stated NCBA.

With the consumers becoming confident in the American beef supply, many of you wonder how this affects cattle producers. What do producers really get out of becoming a BQA Certified Producer? The biggest carat in the whole picture is knowing that you are helping to ensure high quality beef is reaching consumers. As a whole, the industry is looking for ways to reduce defects that cost the industry when an animal is processed.

In Virginia, several marketing programmes, such as the Virginia Quality Assured (VQA) Feeder Cattle programme, require producers be BQA certified to participate. There are several other marketing programmes as well that require producers to be BQA certified to participate.

Cow/calf producers may not see the benefit directly, however the rewards of BQA are compounding.

“I get several calls a week from buyers that are looking for cattle that are from BQA certified producers,” stated Bill McKinnon, Executive Director of the VA Cattlemen’s Association. “If the cattle are not marketed in our VQA programme, the buyers still want to know if the producer(s) have been BQA certified or not.”

With the growing “watch” on the livestock industry, Beef Quality Assurance is a programme that is designed to show consumers that beef producers and the cattle industry are committed to provide a high quality, wholesome product.

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