

# Quality Assurance Comes To Agriculture

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America's beef supply have developed an aggressive Beef Safety Assurance Program, administered by various state organizations affiliated with the National Cattlemen's Association (NCA).

Representing 300,000 cattlemen from all segments of the U.S. cattle and beef industry, the National Cattlemen's Association serves as the industry's national trade association.

The association's Beef Safety and Quality Assurance Task Force studies food safety issues and helps develop educational programs for state cattle organizations to use in developing local quality assurance programs. There are 30 states with beef cattle quality assurance programs, designed specifically to address the needs of cattlemen in those states.

## Veal Producers Depend On Quality Assurance

CAROL PEARCE  
Bradford Co. Correspondent

MARYSVILLE (Perry Co.) — Nestled in the heart of Perry County, situated on 32 tree-strewn acres, is RaJa Hill Farm, a 225-calf veal unit owned by Ralph and Jane Alleman.

Jane is president-elect of the American Veal Association (AVA) and she operates her veal program by the AVA standards of quality assurance.

To Jane Alleman, quality assurance means being able to produce the best quality veal that can be provided for the consumers of the world, especially with the increasing amount of veal that is exported.

The quality assurance program is used when purchasing a calf, which has to be of the highest quality to fit Alleman's program.

She believes the better quality a calf is, the better quality product is produced. This is why the AVA is trying to involve the dairy farmer in their quality assurance program through the new protocol being developed in cooperation with the National Milk Producers Federation and the American Holstein Friesian Association.

This partnering is trying to incorporate the dairymen's assistance in the proper procedure of handling a calf from birth. The practice of dipping the navel, making sure the calf has colostrum, calving in a clean, dry, and warm area, and having the cow vaccinated, will assure the farmer of a higher price for the calf when it is sold, and provide a quality animal for the veal grower.

Once the calf is in Alleman's barn, she gives each one individual attention, which can be accomplished by keeping them in individual pens. Loose or group housing has been attempted, but it is still in the experimental stage because it is hard to keep track of each individual when they are all together in a group.

Alleman believes that a good vet-client-patient relationship is also essential to obtain the best possible advice for the animal.

In the area of medication, Alleman keeps accurate records on every animal treated, keeping track of the type of medication, amount given, and length of treat-

ment. She adheres to the withdrawal time of the medication, making sure there is no residue problem. The AVA's Quality Assurance Education program has been instrumental in lowering Federal Safety and Inspection Services (FSIS) reported residue levels down from 3.2 percent in 1989 to .24 percent in 1991. The statistics are not available for 1992.

The type of feed that Alleman uses is also a contributing factor in the quality of the finished calf. She makes sure she uses a good feed that provides a balanced diet, to assure the best growth in a decent amount of time.

The Allemans also keep a constant check on the iron level by monitoring the blood every four weeks. Jane takes a blood sample from 10 calves in each room to make sure the calves are not anemic, because anemic calves don't grow. Halfway through the period of time that the calves are kept, blood samples are taken from every calf in the barn to determine the iron level and increase the iron on an individual basis as required.

The ventilation system is also an important factor in the growth, health, and development of veal calves. There must be adequate heating in the winter months and cooling in the summer, along with the removal of stale air that can spread disease and cause respiratory problems. Jane's barn has a unique exhaust system that was developed by her husband, Ralph, in cooperation with the building contractor, that is located along the floor under the front of the calves. The stale air is whisked away before it has a chance to be inhaled by the calf.

It is also essential to Alleman that the truckers that haul her animals know what they are doing. She makes sure that the calves are not over- or under-loaded, because improper loading can cause a multitude of problems.

With all of the care that each calf receives for the approximate 16 weeks that they are in the Alleman's care, a trucking mishap would be a disaster. The truck driver must stop and check the calves enroute to their destination to see if there are any problems on board. If this is not the trucker's practice, the Allemans will not use them again.

Since first being developed about five years ago, the emphasis of the National Cattlemen's Association's quality assurance program has been expanded to include much more than just residue avoidance. Quality assurance programs now include information on avoiding cattle bruising and possible reactions to vaccinations, which can affect the cosmetic value of beef cuts.

Of course, cattlemen continue to be educated about safe ways to use animal health products for the production of an abundant and safe beef supply. Quality assurance manuals include fact sheets on product information, residue withdrawal times, animal care, feed production, and cooperation with veterinarians and extension service agents.

The National Cattlemen's Asso-

ciation provides this information, as well as educational videos and a speakers' bureau, in its effort to maintain the safety of beef in the United States.

Members of the Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association and Penn State Beef and Meats Extension jointly planned a Quality Assurance Program in 1992 for the state. Specific procedures for that program included development of a consistent educational effort across the state.

A certification program was developed with an agenda that included general information regarding producer responsibilities for meat quality, record keeping, proper injection site technique, understanding of drug labels and their use in proper use of drugs, animal handling to prevent injury, and a certification test. Educational materials were purchased or developed to support the training.

Last September, 16 county agricultural agents completed the certification program and were designated as trainers and contacts for local cattlemen's groups. The agents will help procure educational materials, assist in planning a local training program, and oversee the certification of participants.

A key component of the training program is the assistance of a local veterinarian to provide the training with proper injections and the use of drugs.

The NCA is coordinating the beef QA programs. For more information, call NCA at (303) 694-0305.

### MILK AND DAIRY BEEF QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM

Bill Sischo  
Extension Veterinarian  
Penn State

Your truck broke down this afternoon and you're on the side of the road waiting for a tow. Your children are home preparing for the evening milking without you. They have the cows in the barn, checked the treatment record by the medicine cabinet, found that cow you treated for mastitis this morning (she had an ankle tag), and arranged to milk her separately.

Milking goes smoothly and you finally make it home to help clean

up. Because of the milking routine, there is little chance that antibiotics will end up in the bulk tank on this farm. The routines have changed quite a bit since they adopted a quality assurance program last year.

The National Milk Producers Federation and the American Veterinary Medical Association specifically designed the Milk and Dairy Beef Quality Assurance Program to help dairy producers market residue-free milk and dairy beef. The unique aspect of the dairy program is that it is a cooperative program between the producer, the veterinarian, and the field representative.

The program is centered on a booklet that helps the producer review antibiotic use and storage practices on the farm. An integral part of the program is an evaluation of practices in conjunction with a veterinarian and the development of a specific plan aimed at decreasing the risk for an on-farm antibiotic violation.

Quality assurance is a responsibility that the whole dairy industry must take seriously, and it begins on your farm. You can obtain a quality assurance booklet from your milk plant or cooperative or you can write to Agri-Education Inc., 801 Shakespeare Avenue, Stratford, IA 50249.

If you have a booklet, take the time to read it, review your farm

practices, and then call your veterinarian to finish the program.

The time and money are a small investment for the assurance to the public that the dairy industry cares to produce a quality product.

### PORK QUALITY ASSURANCE

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Three Cases  
Illustrate The  
Importance Of  
Quality Assurance  
In Pork Production

Case 1: In the May 17, 1993 issue of Newsweek, an ad paid for by the Humane Farming Association appeared on page 17. It was entitled "The Other White Meat" — Has a Very Dark Side." Using an exaggerated and emotional approach, the ad challenged the pork industry on several fronts. One was our use of antibiotics — "The pork industry even claims that its use of drugs and hormones is 'safe.' In other words, they want us to believe that a sow's ear is a silk purse." I suppose that any reader with a minimal amount of

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## Program Assures Public That Pork Is Safe

ANDY ANDREWS  
Lancaster Farming Staff  
KLINGERSTOWN (Schuylkill Co.) — Rick Masser, while keeping busy with his 500-sow farrow-to-finish swine operation, worries what may happen down the pike. Will consumers become so powerful they completely influence the packers?

Will quality control become the only method by which pork producers, who must follow the dictates of consumer concerns, can survive?

The quality assurance program provides "a good way to reassure public that what they are buying is safe," said Masser.

Masser became involved with the Pork Quality Assurance Program about 1½ years ago through the advice of his veterinarian, Dr. Tim Trayer of Hutchison Trayer and Reed Veterinary Associates, Denver. Masser said Trayer "felt one way to reassure the public

that the product they were receiving was safe was to join the program.

"Buyers of pork believe it is good to them and to help (counter) bad press," said Masser. The bad press paints a distorted picture of pork as unhealthy.

The quality assurance program tries to change that by providing the facts and documenting swine producers' efforts to produce a healthy product.

According to the Schuylkill County pork producer, packers aren't putting pressure on producers to strictly follow the guidelines offered by the program through the National Pork Producers Council, but public pressure, in the future, could force them to.

Masser said the program is an honor system that can be followed fairly easily by most producers. He is midway through level three of the program.

## Food Safety Drives Pork Quality Assurance Program

ANDY ANDREWS  
Lancaster Farming Staff  
FLEETWOOD (Berks Co.) — Eastern Berks County swine producer Steve Burkholder said the issue of the 1990s will be food safety.

"To do that, we have to guarantee a quality product," he said. "Everybody's concerned. The 1990s will be more critical for the farmer to provide what the consumer wants — and they want quality."

The National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) Quality Assurance Program has been in effect the past four years at the 150-sow farrow-to-finish operation. Burkholder, in farming with his father

since 1957, took over the business in 1985. He employs one full-time herdsman, Floyd Huber.

Burkholder said his herd genetics were provided by the Pig Improvement Company (PIC). His experience has been good with the genetics, including obtaining a good percentage of lean on the finished hogs. He sells the finished hogs to Hatfield.

All levels of the program are administered by the farm staff and through the work of Dr. Tim Trayer, of Hutchison Trayer and Reed Veterinary Associates in Denver. Trayer performs regular herd checks to ensure segments of the program are completed on schedule.

Fulfilling the requirements of

the program depend on size of the herd and other factors. But the program can be put into effect with ease on most swine operations, according to the pork producer. Burkholder said he believes there should be more producers on the program.

Burkholder serves as president of the Eastern Pennsylvania Pork Producers Association, which has 20-25 members. While many pork producers throughout the state are under contract, and the program is administered by the contract holders, according to Burkholder, most of the eastern Berks producers are independents. The county itself does have contract operations in some parts, however.