

Marketing Wholesome Beef from Cull Dairy Cattle

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Gone are the days when cull dairy cows are processed only into hamburger. Today, restaurant chains are serving steaks and roasts from cull dairy and beef cows. We are all aware that consumers are concerned about the wholesomeness and safety of the food they consume. The Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) program was developed to ensure consumers that cattle are managed in a way to result in safe and wholesome beef and dairy products for the consumer. The BQA program includes more than just giving injections in the neck region to prevent injection-site blemishes. As importantly, it includes such management practices as proper handling of vaccines so that they are effective and maintaining permanent records of cattle treated. A Dairy Herd Checklist is included for you to take a few minutes and evaluate your management practices as they relate to a beef quality assurance program.

Dairy Herd Checklist

This checklist will assist in the identification of Best Management Practices where problems commonly occur.

Individual Treatments

- 1. Written records are kept, including individual identification, date of treatment, product used, amount given, route and location of administration, withdrawal time, serial number (for vaccines), tentative diagnosis, and outcome of treatment. Dry eraser boards can be used in the milking parlor to identify cows treated, however these records must be transferred to a permanent written record.
- 2. All cattle receiving treatment are individually identified.
- 3. All injections are given in the neck region (or as specified by the product label).
- 4. All injections are given subcutaneously (SQ) if possible.
- 5. All medications and drugs are used according to label directions.
- 6. Extra care is taken to select injection sites free of manure and dirt.
- 7. Extra care is taken to see that needles are sharp, and use of broken and burred needles is avoided.
- 8. Needle size used is never larger than necessary to adequately perform the injection.
- 9. Label directions are followed for maximum volume per injection site (maximum 10 cc per site).
- 10. Methods of administration—intramammary, IV (intravenous), IM (intra-muscular), SQ (subcutaneous), or IN (intranasal)—are followed according to label directions.
- 11. A new needle and rectal sleeve is used for each animal to prevent the spread of blood-borne infectious diseases (i.e., Bovine Leukosis Virus [BLV] and anaplasmosis.)
- 12. Chemical disinfectants (i.e. rubbing alcohol) are avoided when using modified live viral products.
- 13. When extra-label animal health products are administered, their use and drug

withdrawal time is based on a veterinarian's recommendation. This information should be provided on a label by the prescribing veterinarian. (Should there be any question about withdrawal period, veterinarians can evaluate the treatment history against information provided by the Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank.)

All animal health procedures and products are periodically reviewed by a veterinarian.

Feed Supply

- 1. Only feedstuffs manufactured in compliance with the Ruminant Feed Ban are utilized.
- 2. Records are kept for purchased concentrate or grain mixes indicating source, date, and amount purchased, and are maintained for at least 24 months when animal byproducts are used.
- 3. Feed additives are used at recommended usage levels and appropriate products.
- 4. All pesticides used on crops fed to cattle are applied according to label directions and withdrawal times are followed.
- 5. Pesticides are stored in a room separate from feed supplies and feed additives.
- 6. All feeds are checked at regular intervals for changes in color, temperature, odor, moisture, and presence of foreign matter.
- 7. Livestock Insecticides
- 8. All insecticides are applied on the basis of label dosages and routes of administration.
- 9. All insecticides are stored in a designated area away from the feed supply and are not accessible to cattle.
- 10. All insecticides are appropriately labeled.
- 11. Facilities and Transportation of Cattle
- 12. All cattle are handled in a manner that minimizes bruises.
- 13. Loading facilities ensure quick and safe loading and unloading with no bruising.
- 14. Adequate shade and shelter provided and mud minimized around feeding areas.
- 15. Clean areas are provided at calving.
- 16. All farm personnel who handle cattle have been informed about proper processing techniques and provided with training to understand cattle behavior and recommended handling techniques.
- 17. Non-ambulatory (or downer) cows are euthanized humanely.

Herd Management

- 1. Cows are observed regularly for body condition score, mastitis and early signs of lameness and are treated or culled in a timely manner to prevent the marketing of over-fat cows, extremely thin cows, lame cows and cows with physical problems.
- 2. Cows that are to be culled are given dry-off time before marketing.
- 3. Do not mix too much vaccine at one time. Modified live vaccines (MLV) begin to degrade after about an hour in the heat and sunlight. Therefore, place in a cooler with a cool pack and cover.

