Alleghany Cattlemen’s Meeting

You’re invited to attend the Alleghany Cattlemen’s Meeting on:

Thursday, February 16, 2006
7:00 p.m.
Alleghany County Office Building Conference Room

Our guest speaker for this meeting will be Jimmy Osborne, Extension Agent with Virginia Cooperative Extension, Grayson County. Jimmy’s topic of discussion will be the “Activities and Organization of the Carroll / Grayson Cattlemen’s Association.

I will be talking with you about:
• NC Farm ID Program
• North Carolina Beef Quality Assurance (Certification to be offered this Spring)
• Pesticide Recertification Ideas for Cattlemen

We plan to have an informative program that we hope will be beneficial to you. Please mark this date on your calendar and make plans to come and be with us. Invite a friend or neighbor to come along with you. I look forward to seeing you on February 16th!
What is Beef Quality Assurance?

Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) is a producer driven program in which cattle producers, from the cow-calf producer to the feedlot sector, assume responsibility for producing beef that is a healthy, wholesome, quality product and free from defects such as injection-site lesions and bruises. Producers in BQA programs keep detailed records of husbandry practices and treatments performed on their cattle. Further, producers involved in BQA programs assure their management, husbandry, and animal health practices meet regulatory and industry standards for these practices.

History of Beef Quality Assurance

In the 1980s cattlemen began investigating ways to ensure their production practices were safe and would pass the scrutiny of the consumer. The focus is centered on producing products that are free from defects, consistent, compliant with harvest and fabrication specifications, and meet or exceed the customer expectations.

The United States Department of Agriculture—Food Safety Inspection Service (USDA-FSIS) began working with the beef industry in 1982 to develop the Pre-harvest Beef Safety Production Program. Involvement with BQA provides cattle producers an important key for avoiding additional governmental regulation. The USDA’s Food Safety Inspection Service has commended the National BQA Program, as 47 states are involved in the voluntary program. Producer driven programs have proven very successful and will continue to allow the industry needed flexibility to produce safe and wholesome food in an economical manner.

In the 1980s, the demand for beef in the United States dropped dramatically. The beef industry began investigating reasons for this sharp decrease. One overwhelming conclusion was that consumers were not satisfied with the end product they were receiving. By and large, the public felt they were paying too much for a product that was not meeting their standards.

Tips & Hints

Goals of the Beef Quality Assurance Program

Why should producers be involved in BQA? Producers should be involved in the program to assure each segment of the beef industry, from the cow-calf producer (including dairy) to the end consumer, that the product they are purchasing is safe, healthy, and wholesome and produced following beef quality assurance guidelines. Producing beef in a manner that follows BQA guidelines can assure the consumer that beef is safe, wholesome, and of high quality.

Economically, there is potential for receiving a premium for calves that are “source verified.” Feedlots have a huge interest in verifiable records of the production and husbandry practices that have been performed on the cattle entering their lots. In some areas, producers are currently receiving a $3 to $5 premium for “source verified (BQA Certified)” calves sold through the local auction market.

Participating in the Beef Quality Assurance program will offer producers the advantage of being prepared for the future. In the future, feedlots may require cattle to be source verified or certified, or discounted at the market.
North Carolina Beef Quality Assurance

How will recertification be handled?

Recertification will be every three years for producers and every two years for trainers. When they are due for recertification, both producers and trainers will be notified by NCCA. Recertification of producers can be done either as self-study or in a special lecture format, and the producer must meet with a certified trainer to take the test that will be based on current program issues.

What if producers were certified under the old program? Are they grandfathered in to this new program?

Due to the many changes in BQA over the last several years, producers formerly certified with the NC Certified Beef Production (NCCBP) program need to be recertified at this time. This recertification will use the same test as the regular certification of new producers. Recertification will maintain long-term program credibility, and is a key feature of the new program. Recertification is a national requirement for all BQA programs, so if a producer formerly certified in the NCCBP program wants to say they are “BQA certified”, they must enter the new program through recertification, and then be recertified every 3 years.

What will happen when changes in regulations, plans for the national ID program, etc. are made?

Updates will be made available to producers through the NCCA website, the Carolina Cattle Connection and extension offices. These updates will then be incorporated into the next addition of the manual. If there are major changes, notification will be mailed to all certified producers and trainers. The certification manual will be reprinted at least once every three years, and producers will get an updated copy when they are recertified.

What are the benefits of a producer being certified in this program anyway?

Currently, the benefit of the certification is for producers to do the right thing. Many truckload sales now indicate on the cattle information sheet if the producer is BQA certified. In the future there will likely be special sales and other programs open only to BQA certified producers. Why should you be a BQA certified producer? The answer is “to show that you are the kind of producer that cares about the future of the beef industry, and because it is the right thing to do!”

Will there be signs for the producers like in the old program?

There will be signs based on the new program logo, but they will be optional and producers will have to pay for them. Price is expected to be about $35.00.

What is the fee structure for the program, and who are fees paid to?

All fees will be paid to the North Carolina Cattlemen’s Association. The charge for being certified in the program is $15 for members of the North Carolina Cattlemen’s Association. For non-members, membership forms will be available at the certification training, and they can join for the normal $25 annual membership fee, and should pay $40 at the time of certification. If a producer does not want to become a member of NCCA even for one year, they can still participate and be “BQA certified”, but the fee will be $40. This is because NCCA is providing some of the operating support for the program and must cover their office costs. About 2.5 years after initial certification the producer will be notified by NCCA that they need to renew their BQA certification.
If I can be of service to you, please feel free to give me a call, 372-5597.

Sincerely,

George W. Stancil
County Extension Director