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## BQA OBJECTIVES & CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

In the June/July 2001 issue of the National Cattlemen Directions there is an annual review of the top seedstock, cow/calf, feedlot and packer operations. Along with the list of the top 10s there are also quotations from representatives of each facet of the beef industry regarding the biggest challenges facing the beef industry. At least one issue identified from each facet of the industry mentioned quality, consistency, food safety, public perception and protection from disease. These are real-life issues that effect beef producers in N.Y.

New York beef producers will be able to work proactively to address all these issues through the NYS Beef Quality Assurance Program.

### ***The objectives of the NYS Beef Quality Assurance Program include:***

- Educate beef producers about the challenges that exist within the beef industry and management practices to deal with those challenges.
- Provide on-farm certification and third party verification of management practices for BQA certification through the NYS Cattle Health Assurance Program (NYSCHAP).
- Provide beef producers with herd plans that address biosecurity, animal health, BQA, food safety and environmental stewardship through BQA certification using NYSCHAP.
- Set production standards in beef operations, which meet or exceed the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) BQA Guidelines.
- Provide technical assistance through NYSCHAP, Cornell University, Cornell Cooperative Extension, NYS College of Veterinary Medicine, the New York Beef Industry Council (NYBIC) and the NY Beef Producers' Association (NYBPA).

### ***BQA Certification Program:***

Our program in NYS will be slightly different, but stronger, than other states. The NYS BQA Program will have two levels.

- **Level One** will require attendance at an educational session concerning beef quality assurance challenges and management practices. Producers will take a short test to verify that they have reviewed the NYS BQA Program Manual. After completing the test, producers will receive a Certificate of Participation.
  - **Level Two** will require enrollment in the NYSCHAP Core and BQA Modules to become a BQA certified producer.
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## New York State Cattle Health Assurance Program

NYSCHAP is an integrated disease prevention program that utilizes a team of advisors to develop a farm-specific herd health plan.

***The objectives of this integrated herd health plan are to:***

- Increase the herd's health, productivity and profitability.
- Assure food safety, public health and consumer confidence in beef products.
- Promote environmental stewardship.

The following steps are taken to design the herd health plan for the beef operation:

- Step 1: Define farm goals and areas of concern.
- Step 2: Assess health risks to the herd and management practices that meet BQA certification standards.
- Step 3: Develop the herd plan for the beef operation.
- Step 4: Review the herd plan with all people working with the beef herd to ensure proper implementation.
- Step 5: Review the herd plan quarterly with the herd veterinarian and annually with the entire herd health advisory team.

The core module of NYSCHAP will examine risk factors for the entry of disease onto a beef production facility, spread of disease within a beef operation, environmental stewardship and product quality. The BQA module will specifically examine management practices that will be required for certification in the NYS BQA Program.

Many states are pondering how to offer third-party verification and recertification of beef producers in the light of short labor resources. By teaming up with NYSCHAP, the NYS BQA Program will be able to offer both. Additionally, NYSCHAP will also be able to help minimize the risk of disease within beef herds, while ensuring a quality product. NYSCHAP is a proactive program that will position NY's beef producers to deal with current and emerging public concern over issues such as animal welfare, food safety and environmental issues.

**Access more information about NYSCHAP at:**

**<http://nyschap.vet.cornell.edu>**

**or**

**607.255.8202**

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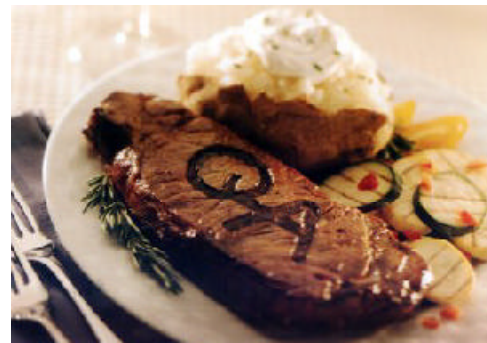
## WHAT IS BEEF QUALITY ASSURANCE?

Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) is a program to ensure that beef and dairy cattle are maintained in a manner, which will result in a safe and wholesome beef product for the consumer. Specifically, BQA is designed to enhance carcass quality by preventing residues, pathogen contamination and carcass defects such as injection site blemishes and bruises. The New York BQA program is based on recommended national guidelines and scientific research. **The goal of the New York BQA program is to increase the competitive base for marketing New York cattle.** This will enable beef producers to add value to their product and maximize marketability.

## IS A BQA PROGRAM NECESSARY?

Concern over food wholesomeness and safety is an important consumer issue. It is of utmost importance that the public knows beef is a safe product. BQA is a good business practice that can identify potential problem areas and thus avoid potential product defects.

Seedstock, cow-calf and dairy producers, stocker operators and feeders must take responsibility for the production of a safe food product through proper animal care, handling, and management practices. Each should assume the responsibility for the role they play in delivering a quality beef product to their respective markets.



## BQA HISTORY

Consumers have always wanted safe food. Because of concerns for beef safety, in 1980 cattlemen began investigating ways to ensure that their production practices would pass the scrutiny of the consumer.

In 1982, the United States Department of Agriculture and Food Safety Inspection Service (USDA-FSIS) began working with the beef industry in the United States to develop the Pre-harvest Beef Safety Production Program. The beef industry adopted the term Beef Quality Assurance (BQA). Implementing BQA practices provides cattlemen an important key for avoiding additional government regulation. Voluntary producer driven programs have proven very successful and will continue to allow the industry the flexibility needed to produce safe, wholesome food in an economical manner.

Between 1982 and 1985, three feedlots and USDA-FSIS evaluated production practices to assess residue risks. In 1985, after careful analysis and adjustment of production practices, these three feedlots were certified by the USDA-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) BQA program. Success of the effort is clear; violative chemical residues have almost disappeared in fed beef cattle and injection site lesions have been reduced by over 67 percent.

The principles of BQA are similar to those developed by Pillsbury for the quality control program for supplying food to the NASA space program. Their program, the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point program (HACCP), gained USDA acceptance and is presently the outline for quality assurance programs in packing houses and processing facilities. HACCP is a process of determining what could go wrong, planning to avoid it and documenting what you have done, with the additional step of validation and monitoring success. As of January 1, 2000, all livestock processing and packing plants have developed HACCP programs according to USDA guidelines. The New York BQA program is designed to bring best management practices to the farm that, along with HACCP principles applied at slaughter and processing facilities, will insure a safe, wholesome, uniform sized beef product for consumers.

