



Canada's Beef on-Farm Food Safety Program

AN INTRODUCTORY GUIDE



QUALITY
STARTS HERE™



BEEF ON-FARM FOOD SAFETY

Join Canada's Beef On-Farm Food Safety Program

Producers joining the Quality Starts Here, Verified Beef Production program help maintain consumer confidence in Canadian beef.

Canada has a reputation around the world for high quality beef. Anything that has the potential to affect beef sales in Canada or internationally, has the potential to affect the entire industry.

Consumers expect beef products to be safe, and everyone in the food production chain has a role to play in food safety. From producers who raise cattle, to those who process, sell or prepare beef at home – everyone must do their part to minimize risks to beef safety.

Recognizing the importance of consumer confidence in Canadian beef, a team of industry leaders working with specialists from across the beef industry developed a national on-farm food safety program for beef producers called the Quality Starts Here (QSH), Verified Beef Production (VBP) program. It's a producer-led program designed to help implement and verify the good production practices on-farm that minimize food safety risks.

Producers can attend training workshops to learn about potential beef safety risks on-farm and which good production practices they can implement will minimize those risks. Producers wishing to prove that they are "walking the talk" can request verification of their on-farm management practices through a third-party certification process.

These are the program fundamentals:

Good Production Practices (GPPs). These beef management practices, identified by the program organizers and a team of industry specialists as most



critical to on-farm food safety, are outlined in an easy-to-use reference manual. In many cases, producers are already implementing these practices on-farm as part of their herd health and nutrition programs.

Effective records. By documenting management

practices that reduce food safety risks, such as treatment, producers show they are implementing good production practices on-farm. As well, documentation helps producers make informed management decisions. Producers are in a better position to manage what they can measure.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

When Good Production Practices are understood and applied in a consistent manner by everyone involved in the operation, they become "Standard Operating Procedures." The national QSH VBP program specifies SOPs in the areas of animal health, cattle feeding, cattle receiving and shipping, pesticide control, biosecurity, personnel hygiene and training. When these SOPs have been successfully implemented, the beef operation can then be certified.

Producers can implement good production practices on-farm to minimize beef food safety risks.



QUALITY STARTS HERE

Protecting Canada's Reputation for Safe, High Quality Beef

When producers participate in QSH VBP, they help safeguard their industry's future.

Think of the damage Canada's beef reputation would face if a broken needle was found in a steak in a high profile restaurant, or in beef supplies overseas in a major trading partner.

What if a human health problem is traced to eating beef that has a drug residue, because withdrawal dates for animal health products were not followed prior to slaughter?

These are exactly the kinds of food safety problems Canada's beef on-farm food safety program, QSH VBP, is designed to prevent.

Across this country, more and more beef producers are getting involved in this national program. When they do, they send an important message - that Canada's beef cattle operators are stepping up in a highly visible effort to show they are implementing good production practices to minimize food safety risks.

While the QSH VBP program is completely voluntary, there is a sense of urgency for beef producers to get involved. There seems little doubt that eventually the market will require verified food safety management programs at all levels. Canada's beef competitors around the world are developing similar programs.

In reality, consumer expectations are very straightforward. They expect safe, nutritious, high-quality meat products with good value and good taste. They expect a lean, clean product with no quality defects, such as injection site lesions.

Producers should be aware of food safety hazards related to beef production and follow the good production practices that will help reduce risks.

By participating in QSH VBP, Canadian beef cattle producers can show that they are responsible and accountable.



Benefits to Beef Producers

There are many benefits to Canadian beef producers who participate in the QSH VBP program. Here are some examples.

Improved production efficiency. The practices in the QSH VBP program are part of fundamental good management, minimizing food safety hazards and producing high quality meat as efficiently as possible.

Greater awareness of food safety risks and costs.

Carcasses are routinely tested by Canadian Food Inspection Agency for violable drug residues, which if present, lead to condemnation. It is far more cost-effective and less risky for producers and consumers if effective control measures are implemented to prevent food safety problems.

Increased market opportunities.

Beef competitors in the food industry, nationally and internationally, have developed procedures for on-farm food safety. Increasingly, the market will be looking for suppliers who can demonstrate the same vigilance.

Reduced risk of government regulation.

The QSH VBP program is a proactive and producer-driven initiative.

Demonstrated reasonable care. This program provides a verifiable system of actions taken.

This shows that producers are responsible and accountable to consumers.

Staff training benefits. Standard management practices make staff training easier, resulting in greater efficiency and less wastage.

Certification recognition. Farm operations will have added credibility from the profile of certified good production practices.



VERIFIED BEEF PRODUCTION

How to Participate in QSH VBP

It is simple for beef producers to get involved in the program.

The QSH VBP program is completely voluntary. While it takes effort to be done properly, the process is not difficult.

Step 1. Attend a QSH workshop. This course provides a complete overview of the program, as well as extensive background training materials and personal assistance in developing SOPs for each operation.

Step 2. Develop a personalized on-farm program. Producers use the information from the workshop to complete their own SOP checklist, tailoring specific requirements, such as treatment protocols, to their beef operation. Some producers will choose to simply implement the SOPs, confident this meets their needs. Others will move to the next step - a certification audit.

Step 3. Apply to become a certified beef operation (Verified Beef Production). The next step is the verification of SOPs on farm. Before a beef operation can become certified, at least one person on the operation must attend a QSH training program

Goals of QSH VBP program

- To promote the implementation of Good Production Practices on-farm that minimize beef safety risks.
- To provide ongoing assurance to consumers and other markets that Canadian beef is produced to the highest safety standards.

provided by the Provincial Delivery Agent. Following implementation of the program's SOPs for three months in a feedlot and six months in a cow/calf operation, the producer can request certification. The Provincial Delivery Agent must be contacted to request a certification audit. A trained, independent auditor hired by the Provincial Delivery Agent will come to the beef operation to verify that the program's SOPs are being implemented.

Upon successful implementation of the SOPs, the beef operation will be certified. Many producers across Canada are already moving to VBP.

More information

More complete information on the QSH VBP program is outlined in this *Introductory Guide*. A complete list of Provincial Delivery Agents responsible for implementing the program in the provinces, and contact information for beef producers across Canada is included on the back page of this publication.

Producer questions and feedback are welcome at any time.

The QSH VBP Training Program

Workshops are available by contacting a Provincial Delivery Agent.

The first step for beef producers is to take the training workshop for QSH VBP. The training course identifies beef safety hazards, how to implement Good Production Practices (GPPs) on-farm to minimize those hazards, as well as proper procedures to follow if issues arise.

The training manual provided at the QSH workshop will help producers implement GPPs on their farms. The manual content is

nationally standardized; it is the official document on program components and processes.

Trainers lead producers through the manual. Organized into easy-to-follow sections, the manual focuses on essential components of safe meat production.

The manual includes:

- An overview of the program issues, concepts, definitions and procedures.
 - Potential beef safety hazards on a beef cattle operation.
 - A checklist of SOPs for:
 - animal health
 - cattle feeding



THE HACCP PROCESS

- cattle receiving and shipping
 - pesticide control and yard maintenance
 - biosecurity, personnel hygiene, and training.
- Examples of protocols, record-keeping forms and a list of educational resources.

Some producers will be comfortable simply implementing the SOPs. But many believe that ultimately the marketplace will require verification and proof of management procedures. These producers will move forward to have their beef cattle operation certified, showing that they have met the national standards.

Verified Beef Production

These are the specific requirements for certification.

Many producers are opting to have their operation certified under the VBP program. There are five specific steps to follow for official certification.

1. Attend the QSH VBP training course provided by a Provincial Delivery Agent (PDA).
2. Complete or update previous QSH Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the beef operation. Also ensure that the documents required for on-farm certification are complete, current and available for review.
3. Contact the PDA for assistance in reviewing the SOPs.
4. Contact the PDA once the QSH VBP program has been successfully implemented for at least three months for feedlot and six months for cow-calf operations.
 - Producers who have successfully completed the on-farm audit process will receive a QSH VBP certificate from their PDA.
 - To maintain certification, producers will need to get certification over a defined period. Contact the PDA for further information.
5. If during a certification audit, SOPs need some improvements or have gaps, the auditor will point this out. The provincial QSH co-ordinator and related support services, such as a veterinarian or nutritionist can help fine-tune SOPs to meet national program requirements. Once these improvements have been implemented, the beef operation will be certified by the PDA.

The Seven Principles of HACCP

The QSH VBP program is based on the principles of an international program used widely in industry, called Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP). Basically it is a preventative food safety program.

There are seven steps to the HACCP process:

1. Identify potential biological, chemical and physical hazards that impact beef safety.
2. Identify production practices where hazards can be reduced or eliminated.
3. Establish limits to ensure key production practices are under control.
4. Regularly monitor the good production practices (SOPs).
5. Establish corrective actions if monitoring indicates a problem.
6. Verify that SOPs are working properly.
7. Establish effective documentation to verify the HACCP plan.

The QSH VBP program has already incorporated these principles into its recommended on-farm GPPs.



GOOD PRODUCTION PRACTICES

Good Production Practices Anchor QSH VBP

Making Good Production Practices (GPPs) part of the beef operation's routine will reduce on-farm food safety risks and improve beef production. They may also improve profitability.

The following examples are typical GPPs. They are described in more detail in the QSH VBP Producer Manual and are explained in the producer Quality Starts Here training sessions.

Animal health management procedures

- Implement a valid Veterinary-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR) for all prescription drugs and extra-label drug use. This means:
 - the veterinarian assumes the responsibility for making medical judgments regarding the health of animals and the need for medical treatment, and the client agrees to follow the instructions of the veterinarian.
 - the veterinarian has gained sufficient knowledge of the animals to initiate at least a general or preliminary diagnosis of the medical condition, either through an examination or by appropriate and timely visits to the premises.
 - the veterinarian is readily available for follow-up in cases of adverse reactions or failure of the regimen of therapy.
 - the veterinarian assists the producer in developing and implementing processing and treatment protocols. Keep processing and treatment records on all animals.
- Use only animal health products approved by Health Canada for use in food animals and purchase only from a reputable source. The only exception is product purchased under an emergency drug release.
- If a broken needle occurs during injection, find and remove the needle. If the needle cannot be removed, contact a veterinarian for assistance. If the veterinarian cannot remove the needle, identify the suspect animal, record on processing or treatment records, inform next owner, slaughter the animal for own use, or euthanize. Retrain staff on good injection techniques.

Cattle feeding

- Do not feed ruminant-derived (cattle, sheep, goat, deer) protein banned by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency as per federal regulations.
- Store feed medications separately from non-medicated feed. Label feed additives/medications and bins to avoid cross-contamination.
- Store all non-ruminant feed separately and label with a warning: "Do not feed to cattle, sheep, deer or other ruminant animals."



- If medicated feed or water is being used, clearly and distinctly label pens to avoid medication mix-ups.
- Verify feed medication scales for accuracy and calibrate as necessary at installation, after

major repair, and at least once annually to consistently ensure accurate dosages of medications are fed to cattle.

- Verify the efficiency/performance of mixers used for medicated feeds to ensure medications are evenly distributed throughout the load, at least once annually, after a major repair or after purchasing a new mixer.
- To prevent medication cross-contamination in feed from other species (e.g., pig, poultry feed), clean feed equipment used in receiving, processing, mixing and feeding by flushing, sequencing, compartmentalization or other means, to prevent drug residue or other species feed carry-over.
- Ensure medicated feed, feed for other species and flushed material are clearly identified and stored in a manner to prevent contamination of other feedstuffs.

Cattle receiving and shipping

- Request animal health records from the previous owner on all newly received cattle. If no animal health records are available, contact a veterinarian for action in cases where newly received cattle require immediate slaughter.





STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

- Review processing, treatment and feed medication records prior to shipment to slaughter to ensure that drug withdrawal periods have been met. If cattle being shipped other than to slaughter have not passed the meat withdrawal period for recently given animal health products, inform the next owner on the drug and withdrawal period.
- Inspect cattle prior to shipment to slaughter to ensure animals are in good health (bright, alert, mobile). If not, contact a veterinarian or shipper for packing advice.

Pesticide control and yard maintenance

- Label pesticides clearly and use according to product label directions.
- Store and dispose of pesticides and treated seed responsibly according to label directions and environmental regulations to reduce risk of chemical contamination of cattle, water or feed.
- Remove manure from feeding facilities and alleys as necessary, and at least once annually to reduce tag (mud) buildup on hides. Provide appropriate bedding during inclement weather to reduce tag buildup.
- Contain or redirect runoff from manure storage areas to prevent contamination of stored feed.



Biosecurity

- Have worker washrooms available and clean regularly to ensure proper hygienic practices and reduce the risk of transferring cysticercosis (beef measles) to cattle.

Training

- Ensure senior personnel in the beef operation have taken a QSH VBP training course.
- Ensure all personnel on the beef operation know their duties and how they impact beef safety. Train and retrain staff as required and keep training records.

QSH VBP program documents

- Keep all program documents, including SOP protocols and records for two years, or longer if required by legislation. Documents should be legible, well organized, stored in a secure location and be easily accessible.

Standard Operating Procedures

Proof for what is being done.

The key to producing a safe food product on a continuous basis is to ensure that every person involved in the farm operation is consistent in applying Good Production Practices (GPPs). Establishing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) is the first step in applying GPPs in a consistent manner.

Standard procedures, based on GPPs, are necessary not only to produce safe, quality beef, but also to produce it efficiently.

SOPs help producers and their staff to:

- recognize potential food safety hazards on a beef cattle operation.
- know which good production practices will prevent these beef safety hazards.
- know what to do if something goes wrong (e.g. broken needle).

- keep documentation that shows conformance to program requirements.

SOPs should be regularly updated. Employee training and evaluation on a regular basis will ensure that GPPs are consistently being carried out according to documented procedures.

Complete details on the program requirements are available at producer training workshops. The producer manual provided describes all required SOPs and provides record examples, including the following:

SOP-01: Animal Health Management

SOP-02: Cattle Feeding

SOP-03: Cattle Receiving and Shipping

SOP-04: Pesticide Control and Yard Maintenance

SOP-05: Biosecurity, Personnel Hygiene and Training



CONTACT INFORMATION

National

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