

IMPACT



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Southwest Idaho Youth Beef Cattle Field Day

The Situation

The beef industry has been implementing Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) guidelines for almost twenty years. These guidelines are a series of management practices that help producers reduce economic losses while increasing carcass quality. Because of BQA education and training, one particular guideline, injection site lesions, decreased from 21% in 1991 to less than 3% in 2000 according to the Beef Quality Audits.

Although 4-H and FFA beef projects only make up one percent of the total market beef produced, youth need to consider themselves as beef producers. If a consumer of a youth-raised market beef project has a bad eating experience with that beef, it can create a negative image for the entire industry. In addition, many youth involved in beef projects today continue to be involved in some aspect of the animal food production industry in the future. Therefore, the Idaho Youth Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) program was created to help 4-H and FFA members understand their responsibility to produce a safe food product while caring for food animals in an ethical manner.

Our Response

Livestock Extension Educators and Extension Beef Specialists used the Idaho Youth BQA manual as the basis for the Southwest Idaho Youth Beef Cattle Field Day held in Marsing, Idaho during February 2006. All youth from District II enrolled in 4-H and FFA beef projects were invited to attend. Extension

partnered with Canyon and Ada County Farm Bureau, Schering-Plough, Northwest Farm Credit Services, Idaho Beef Council and Owyhee Cattlemen's Association to provide the workshop, lunch, and snacks (free of charge) for those in attendance. The morning program focused on BQA training. Youth rotated through six workshops which focused on handling of animals, ethics and animal welfare, record keeping, animal health, biosecurity and carcass quality. Each workshop focused on a specific BQA topic and the importance of following that guideline. The record keeping workshop encouraged youth to read medicine labels and record withdrawal times to eliminate drug residue in meat. Each workshop included hands-on and interactive activities to reinforce the teaching, including activities such as practicing subcutaneous vs. intramuscular injection methods on oranges as shown in the picture below.



Youth BQA participants practicing proper injection procedures using oranges and colored dye.

Participants received an Idaho Youth BQA manual for more detailed information on each of the workshop areas. The afternoon program included a demonstration and explanation of ultrasound and its use in market beef as well as a presentation and participatory taste panel on factors affecting beef's eating quality.

Program Outcomes

Sixty-six youth and 34 adults representing six counties attended the field day. Pre- and post-tests of youth and adults in attendance showed a 14 and 17 percent increase in BQA knowledge as a result of attending the field day, respectively. Youth who attended each of the six workshops received a certificate showing they had attended a BQA training. In addition, youth and leaders in attendance learned more about ultrasound technology. All participants had a chance to try the ultrasound themselves on live cattle. This is an important technique for youth and adults to understand as more selection decisions in the beef industry are being made based on ultrasound results. During the taste panel, youth and adults were able to taste samples of beef from different quality grades and degree of doneness, in an attempt to learn how factors such as marbling and cooking procedures affect beef's eating quality. By attending this field day 4-H and FFA youth gained specific skills and techniques they could use to produce a safe food product.

The Future

Based on the positive response of this first Youth Beef Field Day, plans are underway for another field day next spring. The topic that is currently being pursued is nutrition and feeding of youth market beef projects.

For More Information

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