Beef Quality Assurance taught at Winter Beef School is a success

**The Situation**
The mission of the Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) Program in Idaho is to maximize consumer confidence in beef by focusing a cattle producer’s attention on daily production practices that influence food safety, wholesomeness and quality (Ahola and Glaze, 2006). There are still numerous beef producers in Idaho who are not yet BQA Certified. This poses a potential problem for Idaho’s Beef industry, which ranks 2nd in beef production.

**Our Response**
For the past several years, livestock Extension educators and specialists in southwestern Idaho have coordinated and taught Winter Beef Schools in various counties. To determine topics for each Beef School, Extension educators meet with the District Beef Advisory Council to discuss timely and important subjects. This year, BQA Certification was identified as an important topic. Dr. Benton Glaze and Dr. John Hall were selected to teach BQA at the Gem/Payette County Winter Beef School.

**Program Outcomes**
There were 98 adults who participated in the Gem/Payette Winter Beef School, which was held at the Payette County Fairgrounds in New Plymouth. A post-test was given at the end of the workshop to determine if there was an increase or change in BQA knowledge. A follow-up evaluation was sent six months after the Winter Beef School to determine if longer-term behavior changes were made in their management practices, based on the knowledge gained from the Winter Beef School.

The longer-term evaluation was sent to 92 participants, and received a 42% response rate (39 evaluation forms returned). One question asked “What practices did you change or add as a result of the BQA workshop?” Details of the responses are shown in Figure 1. Based on the responses, 35% of participants have changed their vaccine handling and storage techniques after attending the Beef School. The survey showed that 21% of the participants are now using the proper injection sites. Results also revealed that 15% are cleaning their vaccination equipment correctly, and are utilizing low-stress handling within their operations. Now, 13% say they have changed the needle size they use to vaccinate calves.

Producers were also asked to list two BQA practices they found to be the most important. The most common responses included using the correct injection sites and handling vaccines properly. Responses to another question indicated the producers have continued to stay informed on BQA with the materials received at the Beef School, and will recommend other ranchers to become certified.
In addition, the longer-term evaluation had two multiple-choice questions. The responses indicated that 100% of participants now know where to properly give an injection and 96% know the correct temperature that a vaccine should be stored at.

Overall we were able to document longer-term BQA management practices that will benefit ranchers and their operations. Positive comments from participants indicated that they would like to attend future Beef Schools and receive additional information through Extension regarding beef production.