



## SISKIYOU STOCKMAN

*What's New in the "Top of the State". A report for Siskiyou Livestock Producers put out by the Farm Advisors Office, Cooperative Extension of the University of California, located at 1655 South Main Street, Yreka, California 96097*

**November 2005**

### **Alphabet Soup – Chicken Soup for the Beef Industry?**



- Alphabet Soup –  
Chicken Soup for the Beef Industry?
- Premise IDs
- Seasonal Chores
- Red Books Available

### **Calendar**

Dec 4-7	California Farm Bureau Annual Meeting, Monterey, CA
Dec 13-14	California Alfalfa and Forage Symposium, Visalia, CA
Jan 6, 2006	Special Feeder Sale, Cottonwood, CA

We all know about leppy calves and open cows and other traditional cattle lingo. But what about the new lexicon of acronyms – EID, VID, QSA, PVP, BQA – are those the chicken soup for the beef industry. And, will the industry take the soup or spit it out. Only time will tell, but a brief review of the events that brought us to this position and an understanding of the lingo will help us brew the right medicine for today's industry.

Reduced demand for red meat and particularly beef, primarily due to perceived health hazards, set the stage for industry self-examination. Focus centered on the final product with factors such as toughness, inconsistency, blemishes (abscesses, bruised meat, etc.) and food safety as important issues.

Continuing consolidation of the processing segment, which principally dealt with these issues but was not necessarily the root cause of them, lead to greater demands for uniformity and increased opportunity for proprietary products. Acerbating the situation was the farm financial crisis of the 1980s and for the beef sector it's timely coinciding with the introduction of continental breeds, which increased pounds produced (but with more diversity in commodity than ever).

This lead to value-based marketing in the 1990s, the mother of many of today's brainchilds. Be careful what you wish for. Producers are receiving premiums for certain practices or perhaps discounts for not. The gist of the changes is the typical measureable, physical factors, weight, rate of gain, and feed efficiency for example are still important but credence or attribute factors are also important.

Some of these are: use of implants, grassfed, no antibiotics, humane practices, organic, age, and breed. These factors are difficult to measure; they must rely on records for authenticity and verification, records that have not largely been important or available. The exception is of course carcass characteristics which have also grown in importance and are measureable, if not readily communicated between producer and processor.

As evident with the “cow that stole” Christmas, BSE in a cow in the US December 2003 was a test of our food safety response system. The ability to trace backward and forward were critical for investigating and controlling disease outbreaks. This led to a proposed National Animal Identification System (NAIS). EID comes from that program as electronic identification device. As defined in the proposals this would be a radio frequency identification device, RFID, that uses radio frequency for communication of the identification number. Keeping up with the new lingo, the common ear tag is now a VID, visual identification device. The two, EID and VID, can be used together. Tracing an infected individual back to the source of infection, and tracing forward all others that may have been exposed is difficult, especially when animals have frequent ownership often across statelines and are comingled with other animals. In California there are annually over 3 million cattle transactions. An effective identification system is essential to protect our food supply.

Identification has also gotten into the marketing soup by becoming a key component of verification for specialized marketing. An example is beef trade with Japan. Two programs lead the way in facilitating Japanese trade, Process Verified Program – PVP and Quality Assessment Program – QSA. Both are administered through the USDA and are similar. The programs objectives are to provide suppliers of agricultural products (or services) a way to assure customers of the consistent quality of their products. This is accomplished by having documented processes for production verified through independent, third party audits.



PVP uses the ISO 9000 series (International Organization for Standardization) as a format for evaluating the documentation. More information

about the USDA PVP program can be found at <http://processverified.usda.gov>.

Quality Assessment, QSA, programs are similar to PVP programs, generally being somewhat smaller in scope, perhaps limited to one or two attributes like age and “cornfed”. They are through the USDA and meet the requirements of ARC 1002 Procedures (ARC is for Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Livestock and Seed (LS) Program, Audit, Review, and Compliance (ARC) Branch. For a list of QSA programs see <http://www.ams.usda.gov/lsc/arc/qsap.htm>.

### **What does it mean?**

For marketing it means many of the factors that are important for marketing are not easily measured. Therefore documentation, verification and auditing are used to assure customers of the processes in production. “Cornfed” really means corn fed. Producers cannot typically develop these verification and audit procedures so they link with larger organizations that have gone through the program development. These organizations are breed associations, feedlots, processors, sale groups and others. The heart of the program is based on individual animal identification which brings us full circle back to food safety and disease investigations.

Producers that have previously been vertically integrated with some type of alliance will probably already be involved with PVP or QSA through their partner. They will have guidelines on what is needed from the cow and calf producer to comply with their marketing programs. Others not in an alliance may want to evaluate the programs and become involved to facilitate marketing. Check out the web pages to see the organizations that have programs or ask questions of your buyers.

Animal identification, however it is accomplished, is a key component of a food safety program that instills confidence in the beef supply and continuing customers. The needed ability of the industry to respond to problems such as BSE or even more serious diseases in a timely and thorough manner is difficult to overstate. Individual identification may also be a way to achieve specialized marketing and premium prices. The first step is to recognize that customers are interested in not just the price of beef but many other attributes, and they want to be sure what they are purchasing is what was advertised.

**Now for the test.** The following acronyms were used, can you still remember what they stood for, do you care, and they don't have the flavor of "leppy".

EID, VID, PVP, QSA, BQA, USDA, ARC, ISO, NAIS

### Premise Ids

The first step in animal identification is premise identification. Over 2,000 California producers have premise ID numbers. Information about premise ID numbers can be found at

[http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/id\\_info.htm](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/id_info.htm).

Obtaining a premise ID does not mean you have to start using EID or start identifying cattle individually. It does help get you ready to do that, and may be requested by some buyers.

Premise ID numbers can be obtained by completing a form and mailing it to the California Department of Food and Agriculture. Forms can be printed from the web at:

[http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/pdfs/animal\\_identification\\_CA\\_premid\\_form08-05.pdf](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/pdfs/animal_identification_CA_premid_form08-05.pdf). Premise ID

numbers can also be obtained directly over the web at: <http://www.californiaid.org/>.

### Seasonal Chores

For fall calving herds, make plans now for getting cows and bulls ready for the breeding season. Bulls should have a breeding soundness examination and trich test. Vaccinate and deworm bulls before they go out with the cows. Typical vaccines to consider are for vibriosis, Anaplasmosis, Clostridial and virus diseases.

There are some new choices for cow vaccines. For open cows the modified live vaccines are safe and for pregnant cows the killed virus vaccines are safe. Additionally, there are some new modified live virus vaccines that are safe for pregnant cows IF the cow herd has been vaccinated appropriately in the past. The modified live IBR vaccines can cause abortions if the pregnant cows have not been well vaccinated in the past.

Check your bull power. Older bulls may be broken down, some may not pass the BSE exam. Thin bulls should be fed more to get them into shape for the breeding season. It takes several weeks for them to gain weight.

If you need additional bulls and have been using the same breed for several years, it may be time to implement crossbreeding. As a rough conservative rule of thumb you need at least a 10 cent premium for weaned calves to offset the advantages of a crossbred cow and calf. Angus sired females could be bred to a different breed, often Hereford, and Hereford sired females bred to Angus sires. Continental breeds such as Simmental could also be used as well as crossbred bulls. Another option would be to use all bulls of a different breed for 4 years, then switch to another breed for 4 years.

### Red Books Available

The attached order form can be used to get your "Red Book". Order now while supplies last. Red Books may serve as a tool to help with age or process verification. This type of verification has not been clearly defined and there is no universal method to verify age and processes, such as no growth promoting implants or antibiotics. However, the Red Books may serve as documentation that could help with the verification process.

## Order Form for Red Pocket Calendar Books

Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ books at \$4.00 each. Enclosed is a check for the total amount made payable to UC Regents. Mail books to the address below:

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

(Please mail completed form and check to: Cooperative Extension, 1655 S Main St, Yreka, CA 96097

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This is your copy of the Siskiyou Stockman, which you requested, or which we thought would be of interest to you.

Sincerely,



Daniel J. Drake, Ph.D., PAS  
Farm Advisor - Livestock & Range  
530/842-2711

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