

FACT SHEET: Animal Welfare in Cattle Production

Animal Well-Being	<p>The approximately 800,000 U.S. cattle producers are committed to caring for their herds and producing safe, wholesome beef for consumers around the world.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several factors contribute to animal well-being including food, water, bone and muscle strength, immunity to illness, as well as overall behavior and health. • Cattlemen have long recognized the need to properly care for their livestock. Sound animal husbandry practices – based on research and decades of practical experience – affect the well-being of cattle, individual animal health and herd productivity.
Beef Quality Assurance Program	<p>The Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) program was initiated in 1987 to provide cattle producers with the tools and training necessary to assure animal health and well-being as well as a safe, quality product for consumers. These tools are the result of years of research and experience and are continually updated to provide producers with the latest in animal management information and technology.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BQA includes guidelines on proper administration of animal health products, best management practices and animal handling recommendations with the intent of exceeding the food safety requirements of the U.S. government • BQA influences the rearing practices of more than 90 percent of cattle produced.
Producer Code for Cattle Care	<p>The “Producer Code for Cattle Care,” first developed in 1996, represents a comprehensive set of good production practices, which includes the following recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide adequate food, water and care to protect cattle health and well-being. • Provide disease prevention practices to protect herd health. • Provide facilities that allow safe and humane movement and/or restraint of livestock. • Provide personnel with training to properly handle and care for cattle. • Make timely observations of livestock to ensure basic needs are being met.
Scientific Guidance on Animal Welfare Practices	<p>Animal welfare guidelines, standards and audits are developed with scientific guidance from veterinarians, animal scientists, agricultural engineers and animal well-being experts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temple Grandin, Ph.D., Colorado State University Department of Animal Sciences, has worked closely with beef packing plants to develop best practices for proper handling practices. • Dr. Grandin also has taught facility managers how to conduct regular internal audits of plant practices. The American Meat Institute, which represents packing plants, reports that more than 90 percent of its members administers these self audits. • The Agricultural Research Service conducts scientific research into animal well-being through the Animal Well-Being and Stress Control System implemented in 1994 (http://www.ars.usda.gov/research/programs/programs.htm?NP_CODE=105).
Humane Meat Packing Process	<p>The meat packing process has evolved over the years, based on the latest scientific research, to ensure both humane treatment and food safety. The Humane Slaughter Act dictates strict animal handling and slaughtering standards for packing plants. Those standards are monitored by thousands of federal meat inspectors nationwide and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handling and moving cattle through chutes and pens must not cause stress. • Livestock must be rendered insensible to pain prior to slaughter. • All animals must have access to water while those kept in pens overnight must be permitted plenty of room to lie down and those kept longer than 24 hours must have access to feed.
Animal Welfare Resources	<p>There are many resources that help producers make informed animal health decisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) tracks industry trends, identifies opportunities for improvement and detects emerging problems (http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ceah/ncahs/nahms/index.htm). • The science-based information from NAHMS about animal health, welfare and production is passed along to beef producers through the Center for Animal Health Monitoring (http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ceah/ncahs/index.htm). • The Department of Transportation (DOT) works to ensure proper care when transporting animals. DOT regulations require that animals not be confined for more than 28 consecutive hours. After 28 hours, animals must be unloaded in a humane way and given at least five consecutive hours of rest with access to feed and water.

