



NM BQA Update

by John Wenzel, Extension Veterinarian

There have been many questions recently brought forth by producers regarding the BQA program in NM. I will try to address those questions and also make you aware of some recent changes in the program.

- 1. Why should a producer be BQA certified?** Because it is a positive message to consumers that the beef they produce is safe and wholesome. Over the last few years, the National BQA program has taken the message to consumers about how BQA certified producers follow guidelines that help ensure the safety and wholesomeness of beef. This has resulted in a more positive message in front of consumers who have concerns about beef safety. National media has portrayed beef as unhealthy for the consumer and the environment. We all realize this message is not true, but consumers hear this message frequently. The message from the BQA program helps to address the concerns of consumers. Another reason for being certified is that more large beef purveyors have instructed their procurement services not to purchase calves for their supply chain if they are not from a BQA certified production system. Purchasers such as Tyson and Premier beef only purchase feeder cattle that originated from a BQA certified producer. This can influence the price paid for calves. Markets have shown that there is value in BQA calves. Being BQA certified is the right thing to do.
- 2. Why the NM program?** While it is true that producers can go online and get a BQA number from the national program, we would encourage being certified in the NM BQA program. The NM BQA program is a step up from the national program. Over the last several years, the NM program has undergone a lot of changes that have made our program one of the best in the country. Requiring the VCPR (Veterinary Client Patient Relationship) and CMP (Critical Management Plan) forms is not new, as NM has required it from the beginning of the program. Many states are now moving to require these same documents. The idea behind the VCPR is that producers consult with their veterinarian when treating or administering products to food animals to ensure that the right products are given correctly, and withdrawal times are followed. Having an established relationship with a veterinarian will be essential for producers moving forward. Veterinary oversight will be the requirement when treating food animals. Having a valid VCPR is now a legal requirement for veterinarians to provide antimicrobial products to producers. This will become even more important in June of 2023 when all antibiotics will require a prescription to purchase, as antibiotics will no longer be available over-the-counter.

3. Why require BQA Continuing Education Units? BQA CEU's are important so producers can stay current with new and improved treatments, products and techniques that can be incorporated into their herd health programs. Over the three-year period, six CEU's are required. This equates to attending one two-hour meeting each year the producer is certified. Hopefully they can acquire the CEU's in their home county. The hope is that producers would have to travel minimal distances to attend a producer meeting where BQA CEU's are offered. The idea is that producers attend BQA CEU offerings provided at the county level. The NM BQA program has a very good reputation thanks to those producers who are dedicated to following BQA principles.

Some changes/ clarification to the program:

- If a producer is in the database as expired (since 2014), and they attend a BQA certification training and pass the test, they will not immediately be issued a NM BQA ID, instead they will be flagged as “provisional”. We cannot allow for producers to simply expire, then retest and become certified if they have never complied with the recertification requirements over time. We have several producers who simply expire, then retest since it is easier. This does not accomplish the goals of the NM BQA program. So, we will now issue the “provisional” status (**NO BQA number issued**) until the forms (VCPR and CMP) are returned. They will have up to one year to return BOTH the CMP and VCPR. Once both forms are received, they will be issued a NM BQA ID which will be backdated to their test date.
- If after one year, both forms have not been received, their provisional status will be canceled, and they will have to start over.
- During their provisional status, they are eligible to earn NM BQA CEUs.
- Producers that are currently certified may attend a BQA certification meeting and obtain 2 CEU's for attendance. This can only be done once during each recertification cycle.
- If a producer returns both forms, and obtains 6 BQA CEU's before their certification expires, they will automatically recertify. They will not have any steps to complete as once the requirements are met, it is an automatic process.

The NM BQA program is constantly evolving. As new information is brought forth from National BQA, we try to incorporate “what fits” into our NM program. This is still a work in progress, so we appreciate feedback from county faculty. We want the NM BQA program to remain an Extension driven program. Contact me with ideas, concerns or questions - **John C Wenzel, DVM, Extension Veterinarian** jwenzel@nmsu.edu 575-534-7562.

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