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New Mexico Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) Program

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There have been several changes to the BQA program as of this summer. As the BQA State Coordinator for NM, I want to bring you up to date with these changes. In the beginning, BQA was a state operated, nationally supported program. This summer, the national BQA program launched an overhaul of the program. The national BQA program is being standardized across the nation. The reason for this was that quality regulators from outside of the beef industry were pushing for a governmental type of quality assurance and certification system that would be operated by those unfamiliar with the beef industry. The national BQA program worked to educate and inform those involved that the BQA program was a self-policing program that was capable of providing what was needed. After much conversation, the national BQA program was given the opportunity to move forward with a national presence, which requires standardization across the nation. It is now a nationally operated, state supported program. This change occurred for many reasons. The national BQA program was operating programs in 42 states. New Mexico was one of seven states that were still operating their own program. Logistically, this was not sustainable at the national level as the opportunity to provide consistent training, testing and continuing education needs to be applied across every state. Therefore, the NM BQA program is part of the national BQA operated system.

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 national program?** Joining the National BQA program will have some benefits to NM producers. including a national BQA number that will allow NM producers to access the national BQA educational platform. This platform has several modules developed, and many in

development, over a wide range of subjects. This way, producers can receive CE credits at any time that is convenient for them. The National program requires three hours of CE credits during the term of your certification, which is three years from certification date. BQA certification can be obtained online through the national program, so both certification and CE can be obtained online.

3. **What will happen to the NM BQA program?** The NM program will still operate as it has in the past. Certification trainings (face to face) will still occur at the local level, offered through county or state extension avenues, along with trainings sponsored by other livestock groups and associations. It is still a Cooperative Extension driven program and your county extension agent will assist you with BQA information and, most importantly, offer BQA Continuing Education credits with their cattle producer meetings that are hosted locally. The traditional method of certification and continuing education will not change. The difference is that BQA certification data will be housed at the national level so notifications pertaining to your expiring BQA certification will come from the national office as an email. **A VCPR and CMP form are no longer required.**

The vision is that the National BQA program will provide the necessary program to assure consumers of the quality, safety and wholesomeness of the beef they consume without a governmental type oversight program. The producer's educational opportunities can be either online or traditional, depending on each producer's preference and time constraints. The BQA program is a benefit to the beef industry and is more easily obtained than ever before. Contact your county agent for more information.

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.

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