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Oklahoma Quality Beef Network

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the OQBN?

The Oklahoma Quality Beef Network is a joint project of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service and the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association. The OQBN is a network of beef producers, educators, veterinarians, and industry professionals committed to increasing producers' access to value added marketing opportunities and improving the quality of cattle produced in Oklahoma.

What is the purpose of the OQBN?

The OQBN will offer unbiased information on beef cattle value-enhancement. Through education and tools, it provides producers and others in the beef industry enhanced access to value added programs which may include health management verification, production system verification, genetic verification, age verification, source verification, individual animal identification and traceability, alignment with appropriate value-added cattle markets, and increased access to export markets.

How are decisions made within the OQBN?

The OQBN is overseen by an Advisory Board made up of faculty from the OSU Animal Science Department, Agricultural Economics Department, Department of Veterinary Medicine, and Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association. The board takes any recommendations of OQBN to the OCA board of directors for discussion and recommendations before decisions are made.

Why do we need the OQBN when there are several companies promoting their own health management, age and source, production system, and genetic verification programs?

The OQBN is a "brand neutral" umbrella program that will assist producers by providing unbiased information and tools needed for access in value-added programs. By participating in the OQBN, producers can mix and match pharmaceutical products and still be enrolled in a verified health management program and keep the flexibility to choose options of age and source, production system, and genetic verification programs. An additional benefit of OQBN is the promotion of value-added cattle that are raised in Oklahoma by Oklahoma beef cattle producers.

How can I find out about value-added opportunities available to Oklahoma cattle producers?

Details for various beef cattle programs are listed in the OSU fact sheet: ANSI-3288. This fact sheet and other related information can be accessed through County extension offices:

<http://countyext2.okstate.edu/> Additional information regarding value-added programs in the cattle industry is available at www.oqbn.okstate.edu and www.beefextension.com or producers can contact Doug McKinney in the OQBN office at GantM@okstate.edu or 405-744-6060.

What is “health management verification”?

Preconditioning is a general term that refers to management practices that occur around the time of weaning that are associated with improving health and performance of cattle post-weaning. For example, these practices may include vaccination, castration, dehorning, feeding cattle in a bunk, weaning and deworming.

Most calves are healthy when they leave the ranch, but stress caused by weaning, transportation, change in environment, etc. lowers the level of resistance at the same time exposure to disease is increased. Vaccination programs raise the level of resistance and immunity to viruses and other pathogens before a health issue occurs. It is critical in a successful health program that the proper vaccines be administered correctly and that adequate time is allowed for immunity to establish in an environment where the stress levels are reduced.

There are effective immunization programs to fit different management and marketing systems. Programs are available for administration before, during, and after weaning of calves. These immunization protocols will prepare calves for marketing at weaning or after the backgrounding phase. Some examples include Pfizer SelectVac, Merial SureHealth, Fort Dodge Prime Protection, etc.

What is “age and source verification”?

Developments in beef export marketing have resulted in new requirements and opportunities for producers. Source and age verification is the ability for producers to qualify cattle for beef export markets, make other specific claims, and capture any associated premiums.

Source and age verification for beef cattle has two components. Source verification is the ability to trace beef back to the farm or ranch where the cattle were born. Age verification is the ability to determine and verify the age of the animal at any point throughout the production system, including post-harvest. Standards for age verification cannot be met without first meeting the requirements for source verification and your records alone do not qualify cattle to be sold as “source and age verified.” Source and age claims are validated either through a USDA Process Verified Program (PVP) or a USDA Quality System Assessment (QSA) program.

For participation in a USDA approved Source and Age Verification Program, producers must be willing to share production records to prove the source and age of the cattle. At the very minimum, producers must be able to prove the first and last calf born in every group of calves marketed. Producers must also be willing to participate in an audit process to verify the birth

dates of cattle enrolled in a source and age verification program. Some examples include AngusSource, IMI Global, AgInfoLink USA, Micro Beef Technologies, etc.

What is “production system verification”?

The beef industry is currently undergoing a marketing revolution where less beef is being sold as a commodity and more beef is being marketed based on specific characteristics and/or quality. These “branded” beef programs have grown tremendously over the past ten years and are increasingly resulting in price premiums paid to producers who can provide cattle that excel in the given program’s carcass specifications.

There are numerous natural beef programs available for producers to enroll their cattle and take advantage of the growing demand. Each natural beef program has different production requirements. To qualify for the natural program, management specifies not to use implants, growth promotants, antibiotics, or feed animal byproducts. Some examples are Creekstone Farms, Laura’s Lean Beef, and Samson.

Certified Organic Beef is a fully verifiable production system that collects information on the history of every animal including the breed history, veterinary care, and feed. Furthermore, the cattle must have never received antibiotics, growth-promoting hormones, or fed animal byproducts and must be born and raised with humane treatment on certified organic pasture. Some examples of Organic programs are Organic Prairie and Dakota Beef.

What is “genetic verification”?

Beef breed associations have taken a pro active role in promoting their particular breed of cattle within the industry. Associations will assist producers by providing services that will enable access to source and age verification, process verification, genetics, and management practices. Breed associations also provide marketing assistance to producers in locating and establishing markets for their cattle based on specific genetic characteristics. Some examples include AngusSource, Charolais Advantage, Hereford Verified, Brangus Optimaxx, etc.

What are the benefits of the OQBN Vac-45 program?

Benefits for participation in a certified Vac-45 program for the producer and the buyer include reduced cattle stress and shrink, improved immune system, increased sale weight of cattle, increased market demands, brand-neutral (you and your veterinarian select the products to use). Three vaccination options are allowed (you and your veterinarian select the timing of vaccinations). OQBN cattle can be dual certified in other health management verification programs.

What are the requirements to participate in the OQBN Vac-45 Program?

To enroll calves in the OQBN Vac-45 program, several health and management requirements that must be met. Bull calves must be castrated and healed, calves must be dehorned and healed, calves must be weaned 45 days or longer, Beef Quality Assurance guidelines must be followed, calves must be tagged with a program compliant ear tag, and must follow one of the three specified vaccination protocols.

What are the three OQBN Vac-45 vaccination protocols?

The OQBN Vac-45 program is “brand-neutral” meaning that you and your veterinarian select the vaccine products. The timing of vaccinations include: Option #1 (branding and weaning), Option # 2 (preweaning and weaning), and Option #3 (weaning and postweaning).

Can I enroll in another commercial program and still participate in OQBN Vac-45?

Yes. There are several good health management verification programs available to Oklahoma producers. Many industry representatives are collaborating with OQBN to provide the industry with quality cattle that have several value-added attributes. If you are enrolled in another commercial program, you are likely still eligible to participate in OQBN. See OSU Fact Sheet ANSI-3288, “Marketing Opportunities Available to Oklahoma beef Cattle Producers” for the list of eligible programs.

Can I continue to use my existing protocol and still utilize the marketing options of the OQBN?

Yes. The OQBN Vac-45 program is “brand-neutral” meaning that you and your veterinarian select the vaccine products. OQBN has no specific vaccine requirements as long as one of the three vaccination options are followed and met. Most other health management verification program health protocols will meet the specifications of the OQBN requirements.

Is there a program compliant ear tag available for OQBN Vac-45?

Yes. An OQBN tag is required for all OQBN Vac-45 sales. However, other health management verification program compliant ear tags will qualify for participation as long as there is no duplication of tag numbers. There will be a minimal charge for the OQBN ear tag.

What are the OQBN Vac-45 marketing costs?

The only marketing costs associated with the OQBN Vac-45 are the regular marketing fees associated with the cooperating sale facility and the cost of the OQBN program compliant ear tag. There are no additional fees for participation and no membership fee requirements.

Who determines the marketing costs?

The marketing costs are determined and set by the cooperating sale facility. There are no marketing fees associated with OQBN participation other than the regular commissions charged by the sale facility.

What is the OQBN Vac-45 enrollment process?

To enroll your cattle in the OQBN Vac-45, you must complete an enrollment form and submit it to the OQBN office. The information required on the enrollment form is producer contact information, number and sex of cattle, vaccination records, management practices and nutrition of the cattle. The enrollment process must be completed a minimum of 21 days prior to the sale date or shipping event.

What does third party verification mean?

Third-party verification is required for OQBN Vac-45 through a certified OQBN representative. The verification process requires the inspection of the cattle and verification of weaning, castration, dehorning, vaccination, and that all information on the enrollment form are complete.

Who will verify my cattle in the OQBN Vac-45 program?

A representative of OQBN will conduct the third party verification within 21 days of the sale date or shipping event.

Who is the OQBN representative?

Gant Mourer is the coordinator of the Oklahoma Quality Beef Network but it is a joint effort among all Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Personnel. OQBN representatives include county educators, area specialists, and state livestock specialists. The OQBN office is located at 201 Animal Science, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078. Gant can be contacted at GantM@okstate.edu or (405) 744-6060.

What does commingle mean?

To commingle means to mix or combine into a single unit. In relation to the OQBN Vac-45, some sales will commingle the cattle to put them into larger, more uniform lots for sale. Research has shown that buyers pay premiums for larger lots.

Do I have to commingle my cattle in order to participate in OQBN Vac-45?

No. If you do not want to commingle your cattle with other producer's cattle, it is not required. Just notify the OQBN representative and/or the sale facility in advance of the sale.