

## Quality Care Matters

A Column about Dairy Animal Care provided by the Pennsylvania Beef Council



# Beef and Dairy Audits: The Proof Is in the Practice

As the media spotlight shines brighter on animal husbandry practices, producers increasingly realize they need to play offense to win back public trust and preserve their livelihood. They can respond proactively with their own stories of animal care and good stewardship, through on-farm tours, websites, blogs, or social media tools. As this column will discuss, beef and dairy producers also can participate in on-farm evaluations, and validation by third-party auditors, giving enhanced credibility to best management practices. This is the first article, in a two part series, about audits.

### BQA Audit Program

While an animal welfare audit is a new concept for many producers, it's old hat for Pennsylvania Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) certified producers. "We initiated the audit component in our program at the request of former Secretary of Agriculture Sam Hayes eight years ago," said Paul Slayton, Pennsylvania Beef Council executive director. "He knew, early on, that random program audits would add validity and encourage more producers to participate in BQA. Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture regional veterinarians became the third-party auditors and we randomly select 30 BQA producers for audit each year," he explained. To date, auditors have evaluated 250 farms or nearly 8 percent of all BQA farms.

Phil Druck, BQA cow/calf producer from Sabinsville, Tioga County, was selected for an audit this summer. "We keep a record of everything on this farm," Druck noted, "We don't have anything to hide, so it was easy to prepare for the audit." In addition to looking at Druck's record books, the regional veterinarian asked him a few questions about his operation and facilities. The audit revealed missing serial numbers for a vaccine batch, something Druck knows he can easily correct in the future.

"The most common issue I see, on farm, is improving treatment and vaccination records," said Dr. Elizabeth Santini, Veterinary Medical Field Officer, Pennsylvania Department of Ag, Region V. "I tell producers to make record keeping routine, to make it a habit," she said. If Santini finds bigger issues, such as inadequate restraining facilities or a surface area that causes cattle to slip, the producer has time to make the needed changes and then request a follow-up visit.

In reflecting on the program's success, Slayton thinks that audits have helped producers become better managers of their cattle and better managers of their resource infrastructure. Santini echoed those sentiments, saying, "When I visit farms, I encourage producers to become BQA certified and join the community of good managers."

### FARM Program

In October 2009, the National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) unveiled the National Dairy FARM Program™ — Farmers Assuring Responsible Management. A three-phased program designed to bolster consumer trust and confidence in the dairy industry, FARM's first phase is

producer education and includes a 78-page Caring for Dairy Animals manual, user guides, and animal care videos with best management practices. The second phase, on-farm evaluations, kicked off this September. "We brought all interested parties - cooperatives, processors, veterinarians, academia, and producers - to the table when developing this program," said Betsey Flores, NMPF Director of Regulatory Affairs. "I think the time is right for FARM," she continued. "The dairy industry is committed to ensuring the well-being of the animals in our care. Consumers are driving change and providing assurance on animal care can have a huge impact on their purchases at the grocery store."

To prepare for the on-farm evaluations, NMPF conducted trainings this summer for evaluators, including Dr. David Wolfgang, Penn State Extension Veterinarian. "Training will be important to FARM's success. We want evaluators to be consistent, looking for similar things, in every herd," Wolfgang said. Evaluators will observe basic categories of animal well-being such as: animal health, nutrition, housing and environment, transportation and handling, and management and record keeping.

"We will collect farm data, such as body condition and lameness scores, give producers a status report, and then send the information to NMPF for future statistical analysis," Wolfgang said. That analysis will be the third phase of the FARM program, third-party verification. "We'll take a random subset of farms, audit those farms with a third-party auditor, and then compare it to the overall FARM data to ensure program validity and integrity," Flores said.

In Pennsylvania, milk cooperatives and processors are promoting the FARM program to their members, with some evaluations already completed. Flores notes that independent producers also can enroll in the program, by downloading an application from the FARM website, <http://www.nationaldairyfarm.com>. The program plans to evaluate all participating farms every three years.

Wolfgang, an enthusiastic supporter of both the BQA and FARM programs, knows that audits are semi-controversial and not understood by most farmers. He also knows that for most farmers, evaluations give information that can help them on their operation. "An evaluation could help make your product better, your cows healthier, and even make you a little more money," he said. "And at this juncture, if we're smart, we have a window of opportunity to take the best parts of various evaluation systems and develop programs that will improve our industry."

For more information on the BQA program, and audits, visit [www.pa-bqa.org](http://www.pa-bqa.org) or contact the PA Beef Council office at 1-888-4BEEFPA. Find additional information on the FARM program at [www.nationaldairyfarm.com](http://www.nationaldairyfarm.com) or by calling the NMPF office at 703-243-6111.



The 2010-11 Pennsylvania Beef Council officers were elected on Oct. 20. They are, front row, starting left, Michael Kunsman, vice chairman; Tim Forry, secretary; Greg McKean, treasurer. Back row, from left, Alan Frederick, chairman and Dennis Byrne, immediate past chairman.

## Beef Council Announces Slate of Directors Frederick Named Chairperson

BEDFORD, Pa. — The Pennsylvania Beef Council board of directors elected Alan Frederick, Bedford County, as chairperson during their recent re-organizational meeting on Oct. 20. He succeeds outgoing Chairperson Dennis Byrne, Chester County, who led the Board from 2009-10.

Dairy farmer Alan Frederick operates Frederick Farms, Inc., with his family in Friends Cove, Pa. The family's Jersey cow herd totals 740 animals, with about 390 milking cows. Alan's previously served as president of the Bedford County Economic De-

velopment Council and is an active Rotarian.

Clearfield County veal and beef producer Michael Kunsman is the organization's new vice chairperson. Mercer County beef producer Greg McKean and Lancaster County dairy producer Tim Forry complete the Beef Council slate of officers, serving as treasurer and secretary, respectively.

Retiring from the Board after serving two three-year terms are Michael Coleman, Bob Hay, John Ligo, and Senator Elder Vogel, Jr. Re-elected to the board were Bill Weist, Snyder County, a market representative, and

Michael Kunsman, Clearfield County. Newly-elected board members are Jennifer Heitzel, dairy producer from Blair County; J. Steven Paxton, a dairy producer from Mercer County; Robert Bateman, a beef producer from Westmoreland County; and Drew Wilkins, packer representative from Cargill Meat Solutions, Bradford County.

At the meeting, members elected Erskine Cash, Centre County, and Clayton Harnish, Lancaster County, as National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) directors. Cash fills the national beef seat while Harnish will focus on national veal programs.

## Fall BQA Trainings Posted

Fall Beef Quality Assurance trainings were announced by the Pennsylvania Beef Council. The dates and locations are as follows.

- Nov. 16 — BQA Training-Lancaster County, 6- 8 p.m.,

- New Holland Sale Stables in the short leg barn sale arena, New Holland, Pa.

- Nov. 18 — BQA Training-Susquehanna County, 6-8 p.m., Jeff & Ann Nogan- Applewood Farm, Scott Township, Pa.

- Dec. 13 — York County Recertification/Classroom Training, 6-7 p.m. (Recert), 7-9 p.m. (Classroom), 4-H Center, York, Pa.

- Dec. 15 — Potter County Classroom Training, 6-8 p.m., Trish Adams' Farm Shinglehouse, Pa.

### Monster Mash Meatball Soup

1 package (16 ounces) frozen fully-cooked beef meatballs  
1 cup frozen vegetable mixture, such as broccoli, cauliflower and carrots  
2 cups water  
1 can (14 to 14-1/2 ounces) ready-to-serve beef broth  
1 can (14-1/2 ounces) diced tomatoes with roasted garlic  
3/4 cup uncooked Halloween pasta shapes

Spooky Decorations:  
Dairy sour cream full moon  
Black olive bats  
Parmesan cheese ghosts  
creepy croutons

Combine frozen vegetables, water, broth, tomatoes and pasta in large saucepan; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer 8 minutes or until pasta is just tender.

Meanwhile microwave meatballs according to package directions. Add meatballs to soup; simmer 3 minutes or until meatballs are heated through. Garnish with spooky decorations, as desired.

