



# Beef Quality Assurance Campaign Seeks Greater Understanding of Industry Efforts

The Beef Quality Assurance campaign is strengthening the link between the beef industry and consumers.

About 85% of U.S. beef today comes from Beef Quality Assurance (BQA)-certified farmers or ranchers. But do American consumers know that? Just as important, do they know what BQA is — and what it stands for?

Those are the kinds of questions a new Beef Checkoff-funded campaign from the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), a Beef Checkoff contractor, is addressing. Its goal is to bridge the gap between what the industry is doing to produce high-quality beef in a humane, environmentally friendly way and what consumers know about those efforts.

The new campaign, designed to meet the consumer's desire to learn more about how beef is produced, kicked off in October 2019 with a series of videos from *Beef. It's What's for Dinner.* that bring the BQA program to life by highlighting how cattle farmers and ranchers across the country raise cattle under BQA guidelines.

The videos and corresponding audio clips will be used to advertise on platforms including YouTube, Hulu, Pandora and Spotify and will also be made available on a new BQA section of *BeefItsWhatsForDinner.com*. Consumers will also learn more about BQA through interactive "BQ&A" Instagram stories that address common questions about how cattle are raised. The video, website and social activations provide consumers with an overview of the BQA program and the ongoing commitment of cattle farmers and ranchers to care for their animals and

provide the safest and highest quality beef possible.

In addition to the digital marketing and social activations, media sources, such as Bloomberg, Reuters, USA Today and others will be introduced to BQA, and influencers and beef advocates will share BQA information with their audiences.

"The campaign expands the reach of a traditionally producer-facing program," says Josh White, executive director of producer education at NCBA, a contractor to the Beef Checkoff. "Beef farmers and ranchers are committed to not only caring for their animals and the environment in which they do that, they are dedicated to delivering the safest and highest quality beef possible," he says. "At the same time, research shows that consumers want to know more about how and where their food is raised. This new effort shares information about the program with consumers in a way that benefits both producers and those who enjoy their beef."

## PRODUCER SUPPORT

U.S. beef producers who have embraced BQA are encouraged by this step to get the message to those who buy beef.

"I'm so excited about BQA becoming a consumer-facing program," says Kim Brackett, a cow-calf producer whose operation sits on the Idaho/Oregon border. "The average consumer does not know what is happening in our industry. This is going to help reassure them as they're making their purchasing decisions."

Brackett and her husband, Ira, have four children who will be the sixth generation involved in cattle production. She got involved in BQA about 15 years ago and helped get it going in her area. A former chairman of the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board, she is currently the vice chairman of NCBA's BQA advisory group. Brackett says being open with consumers is key to industry success.

"We're living in a transparent world," she says. "Sometimes it's hard to make the connections we need with our customers and BQA helps bridge that gap."

Brandi Karisch, beef cattle extension specialist at Mississippi State University, says as a mother of two young children she sees the problem frequently.

"In talking with other moms, it's kind of shocking some of the things they believe," she says. "There's just a lot of bad information out there. Now is an important time to correct that," she says.

After completing her undergraduate work at LSU, Karisch went on to get her Ph.D. from Texas A&M University and is now the co-coordinator of the BQA program in Mississippi. Karisch grew up in Southern Louisiana on a small purebred cow-calf operation and says timing for the new campaign could not be better.

"BQA is one of our shining moments as a beef industry. It's really important for consumers to hear about it," she says.

"The *Beef. It's What's for Dinner.* brand provides a tremendous foundation for this effort," says

Alisa Harrison, NCBA senior vice president for global marketing. "For more than a quarter century, consumers have come to know and respect *Beef. It's What's For Dinner.* and this is the next step in helping consumers understand how beef is produced."

Harrison says the primary audience for the new campaign will be older millennial parents. To all consumers, however, the messages will be transparent and open, featuring the point that cattle are safely, humanely and sustainably raised.

"There's so much negative media and noise out there, any reassurance we can provide, that only helps," says Brackett. The fact that information is continually updated and kept fresh is also a positive, she says. "Producers themselves are in charge. It's very attainable," she says.

Karisch agrees. "Producers always have a voice in BQA, and that's important," she says.

## A BIGGER AND BETTER PROGRAM

Participation in BQA by farmers and ranchers continues to grow as certifications, including dairy and youth facing programs, recently surpassed the 350,000 mark. Throughout the country producers are becoming BQA-certified through in-person and online training. Certified farmers and ranchers must be re-certified every three years.

Online BQA training provides 24/7 access to the program through a series of videos and animations in the areas of cow-calf, stocker/backgrounding and feedyard. In-person training is available through sessions conducted by hundreds of in-state BQA coordinators throughout the country. The certifications are also available in Spanish.

## DOING THE RIGHT THING

Bottom line, BQA encourages proper animal care, and consumers should feel good knowing there is a national program in place that sets consistent animal welfare and care standards across the beef industry.

"BQA helps us be better stewards of animals and the land," says Karisch. "That's really the key."

"But there's a lot of noise out there about animal welfare. That creates a lot of bad vibes for the cattle industry."

Those are vibes the industry cannot afford, Karisch says. "I do not want people thinking bad things about our industry," she says. "Some of the finest people I know are in the cattle business. And we really are doing things right." **HW**

**Editor's Note:** This article was provided by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association.