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## Beef Quality Assurance Notes

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Animal Health  
Fact Sheet



# BEEF QUALITY ASSURANCE NOTES

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## CALFHOOD INJECTIONS

Most of us have felt that injections given to a calf early in its life would be of little problem by the time it went to slaughter. We were **WRONG!!!** Colorado State University has provided the data and the pictures to prove it. In fact, 90% of the lesions found at slaughter originated during the cow-calf, stocker or early feeding periods. And, injections given while the calf is young caused greater lesions than those given when it was older. The study followed calves injected at branding or weaning and found a high incidence of lesions and blemishes when they went to slaughter. Another finding was that the injections given into the neck caused much fewer and smaller lesions than did those given into the rear legs. The absorption from the neck region is probably better and faster, and it is certainly done with less muscle damage. Observation showed that injections into the neck muscles did **NOT** cause the calves to avoid the feed manger or water trough.

## INJECTIONS

Pork producers had to stop making injections into the ham area several years ago. They did make the change and now inject only into the neck area. It is time for us in the beef industry to learn that same lesson and make that same move. We must **STOP** injecting into muscles of the rear leg, hip, loin or anyplace else, **EXCEPT** the neck. And we should try to use products which can be given subcutaneously rather than intramuscularly. We need to quit saying “can’t” and figure out how to do what we **HAVE** to do.

## KNOTS

If you hear of someone trying to dock the price to a producer because of knots on the neck of cattle from SQ injections, don’t let them get away with it. “Call him” on it and help educate the cattle industry that those knots are a blemish, not a “lesion.” There is a difference. If you need further information or data to supply during this education process, contact the National Cattlemen's Beef Association for assistance.

## CANCER EYE

In herds experiencing cancer eye, the producer should be sure that eyes are examined every time the cows are worked through the chute. Many of the pre-cancer lesions will regress on

their own but those moving into the early cancer stage should be treated. Plaques on the corneal surface can be shaved off and the area treated with silver nitrate. Lesions on the lids can be treated with cryosurgery (freezing). If treated early, and then the cow is marketed soon after healing is complete, there is seldom a need to remove the eye. Plan for eye treatment as part of the handling process. If the veterinarian is coming to the ranch, request that he come prepared to treat the cancer eye cases, so he has the needed materials and equipment with him. Or, haul those that need treatment to a veterinary clinic later. If the cancer eye lesions have progressed so far as to be severe, the animal should be euthanized and disposed of rather than being sent to slaughter.

## **HORNS**

Cattle with horns cause severe bruising of other cattle. Horn “tipping” has been shown to be of little help in reducing it. This bruising causes discomfort for the injured cattle and often leads to abscess formation at the site of bruising. This problem also causes excessive trimming if the animal is sent to slaughter. It is much preferred to do a “clean head” dehorn, at a young age. Use of heat (thermal dehorning) will avoid the mess and blood loss with minimal pain and discomfort for the calf. Thermal dehorning equipment currently available includes electric, battery operated or gas heated tools. Horns have to be removed from cattle at slaughter in order for the carcass to proceed along the processing line. When this is done, dirt and hair often gets into the horn sinus and results in condemnation of the head and is an economic loss to the packer. In the long term, producers pay for both this condemnation and the bruising.

## **ABSCESSSES**

Cattle with obvious abscesses are docked in price at sale. Have abscesses lanced, drained and allow time to heal before marketing for the better price. Abscesses may be due to puncture wounds, so repair protruding nails and other sharp objects. Bruises also provide an excellent area for bacterial growth. Bacteria present in the blood circulation tend to settle in these bruised areas, cause infection and eventually abscess. Prevent bruises by dehorning cattle (preferably as young calves), by providing gates of adequate width and by using care in handling and moving cattle.

## **VACCINATIONS**

Vaccines are an important tool that can be very helpful. But they are also an expense, require time, labor and effort in handling cattle to administer them. Some are stressful and may retard gains after administration. To be most effective and efficient in use of vaccines, have and follow a planned vaccination program. Choose products which can be given subcutaneously whenever possible. Be sure to read and follow all label directions, especially in regard to the initial vaccination and any recommended boosters. Administer subcutaneously if possible, but if it must be given intramuscularly, give it into the muscles of the neck. Adapt your squeeze chute as needed to facilitate injections into the neck area. Use clean equipment and change needles often.

## **CULL COWS**

Beef producers have had the perception that cull cows just go for hamburger, so bruises or injection lesions won't matter. That is not true. Many cuts of meat, even from cull cows, are used for steaks and as roasts. These cuts provide an important marketing outlet and are vital for a viable industry economy. Preserve the quality of these primal cuts by making all injections into the neck area, not the rump, leg or loin muscles. Avoid injection site lesions in these primal cut areas.

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