



## Dairy/Beef/Livestock

### University-industry partnership helps raise quality of Idaho beef

Over 400 Idaho beef producers have earned Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) certification through a three-way partnership of the UI Extension, Idaho Beef Council (IBC), and Idaho Cattle Association. A voluntary educational program initiated by the U.S. beef industry, BQA relays to producers the nationally endorsed, best-management practices that yield high quality, wholesome, and safe beef products.

“Even if they don’t always get paid back directly for the changes they make, producers agree that this is the right thing to do,” says Jason Ahola, UI Extension beef specialist at Caldwell. “Today’s consumers are choosier and want more assurance about how their food products have been managed and processed.”

Sarah Baker, IBC program coordinator and BQA advisory committee member, says BQA “enables cattle producers to enhance their product and verify that their cattle are produced with uniform guidelines.” In the future, she hopes participants will also enjoy monetary and marketing incentives. “In a lot of places, producers are being paid more money for BQA-certified cattle,” she says.

At workshops implemented by UI Extension and funded (via their \$1-per-head checkoff) by Idaho beef producers, participants learn how to improve their cattle-handling methods, injection techniques, record-keeping, and disease prevention strategies; they also get details about the National Animal Identification System. Workshops have been presented at eleven locations in northern, southwestern, and central Idaho and are planned for the Magic Valley and eastern Idaho. Producers who pass a BQA examination at the workshops’ close are certified at no charge for three years.

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### UI pilot animal-ID project installs electronic ear tags in 8,000+ cattle—and buffalo

As the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) rolls out across the U.S., it’s not just Idaho’s beef cattle, dairy cows, sheep, and domestic elk whose ears are being studded with button-sized electronic IDs. This winter, UI Extension educator Danielle Gunn and tribal buffalo manager Lance Tissidimit tagged over 160 buffalo at the Fort Hall Indian Reservation with the computer-chip bearing IDs.

That brings to more than 8,000 the number of livestock included in a UI pilot proj-

ect led by Dr. Jim England of the Caine Veterinary Teaching Center. The project aims to help Idaho producers from 15 cooperating cattle (and now bison) ranches evaluate electronic identification hardware and software and apply the technology’s many record-keeping and livestock-management advantages. It’s among eight efforts funded by a \$1.16 million USDA grant to Idaho’s NAIS Coalition.

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## DID YOU KNOW?

**573** MILLION POUNDS of red meat were produced in Idaho during 2003, including beef, veal, pork, lamb, and mutton (excluding farm slaughter).

Source: 2004 Idaho Agricultural Statistics, p. 50

### Inheritance factors and marbling in beef cattle

Where fat forms can be one of the most vexing problems for people. For cattle producers, it can be a problem—or an economic opportunity. A study based at the Nancy M. Cummings Research, Extension and Education Center near Salmon focuses on inheritance factors that affect marbling in beef cattle, a key ingredient in meat quality.

The inheritance study led by UI animal science professors Rod Hill and Carl Hunt and conducted by graduate student Tiffany Skow traces the influence of genetics on carcass quality.

A closely related study by Moscow-based animal physiologist Hill is also providing valuable information about how efficiently beef cattle use feed, a key influence on beef producers’ bottom lines.

Beyond their importance to Idaho’s beef industry, Hill’s studies of fat physiology could have important implications for human diseases such as diabetes.

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