

A focus on animal care

Today's cattlemen are true stewards and caretakers for the livestock that has been entrusted to them and have been so for generations. They have a great story to share, and consumers are listening. Writes Lora Wright, Director Animal Well-Being, Sustainability, Tyson Foods.



Drums at one of Tyson's tanning facilities

Fewer than two percent of today's consumers are farmers, and the average consumer is three generations removed from the farm. Most have never been to a farm and may not know the day-to-day practices that go into caring for animals. However, they want to know that animals raised to provide nourishment live a good life and are cared for by all operators in the supply chain. And they want to make purchasing decisions with the confidence that the animals used in the process for making the meat they eat, as well as the leather products they use, were treated in a way that is aligned with their values.



Lora Wright, Director of Animal Well-being, Sustainability, Tyson Foods

Tyson FarmCheck programme

In October 2012, Tyson Foods launched its FarmCheck programme to reassure customers and end-users of the proper treatment and care of animals on the livestock and poultry farms that supply us. Since its launch, active participation from suppliers has been required in order to be a Tyson Foods cattle supplier. The programme includes onsite audits that are conducted by a third-party verifier to review five elements:

- 1. Training** – The feedlot manager is required to have completed Beef Quality Assurance training within the past three years. Furthermore, any employee that will be handling the livestock should be trained and aware of the expectations regarding care for those animals.
- 2. Site Self-Check and Site Assessment** – Feedlot management is required to conduct a self-check on the key animal welfare elements annually. The Beef Quality Assurance Feedyard Assessment is a great tool for feedlot operators to use to ensure they are conducting the activities in their operation as they were trained for and must be completed on file. Recommended to be done annually, it may be completed via self-assessment, a second-party (such as a consulting vet or a state BQA Coordinator) or a third-party verifier.
- 3. Animal Observations** – This element verifies the true care for animals that happens daily while feeding cattle. Observations are made and interviews are conducted on practices such as pen maintenance, plans for extreme weather conditions, protocol for handling sick or injured cattle and facility repairs.

4. Animal Handling – Much like the Animal Observations section, the Animal Handling element is the true testimony of good handling practices while processing, loading or unloading cattle. Observations are made and interviews conducted regarding these practices, as well as appropriate driving tools and protocols for euthanasia.

5. Acts of Abuse – Acts of Abuse are practices that would intentionally harm or injure an animal and they are not allowed in responsibly raising livestock. This element helps convey the importance of such standards.

Results from the audits are shared annually in the Tyson Sustainability Report (www.tysonsustainability.com). Any time an area of improvement is identified, Tyson will work with the producer to ensure these standards are met. This drives continuous improvement for our industry and helps share the story of all the good things cattlemen do today.

Earlier this year, Tyson Foods sent a letter to our cattle suppliers further outlining the expectation and utilisation of Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) and Beef Quality Assurance Transportation (BQAT) certification. BQA guidelines strengthen trust and confidence in the entire beef industry. As of January 1, 2019, any cattle supplier to Tyson Foods, including livestock markets, will be required to have BQA training certification (or an equivalent) on file with our company. In addition, now that the BQA Transportation programme is in place, anyone shipping cattle directly to Tyson will be required to present training certification starting January 1, 2020.

Today's cattlemen are doing what's right for the cattle they feed. Continuous improvement and sharing the good story is something we all can do to help to sustain our industry. BQA certification allows consumers to better understand and feel good about the beef production story, and also allows cattlemen to get credit for the work they do to feed consumers around the globe. Equally important to Tyson Foods is answering the call for transparency with our hides and tannery customers. We will continue to seek out improvements in traceability throughout the process and supply chain while keeping focus on animal care and sustainability. ■



Angus cattle on pasture