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Livestock and Seed Program

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Dispelling the Myths About Livestock Marketing Programs for Producers



**Agricultural Marketing Service
Livestock and Seed Program**

**Supporting American Agriculture
with Marketing Services that Matter**

What are USDA verification programs?

Livestock producers can request the voluntary, user-fee services of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to verify specific practices as a means to potentially increase the value of their products. This service is accomplished with independent, third-party audits that verify a company's documented quality management system. Quality management systems identify and preserve certain characteristics and processes that are critical to a product. This also ensures truth in labeling for the consumer.

Why do our verification services matter?

Our Industry and Customers Demand It!

USDA Process Verified Program (PVP) along with its close cousin, USDA Quality System Assessment Program (QSA), have been gaining U.S. customer support and have more recently been recognized by our foreign customers in Japan as being an approved method for verifying that cattle are 20 months of age or younger. Over 20 additional countries and numerous domestic clients also depend on these programs to verify preservation of characteristics and requirements.



Simply stated, verification programs provide a structure for producers and the livestock industry to show "we are doing what we say we are doing."

Our Future Depends on It!

These programs coupled with good husbandry practices will improve the overall U.S. herd and ultimately make U.S. beef producers more competitive in today's global market.

Dispelling the Myths About Verification Programs

Myth: Producers must have their own individual USDA verification program.
Fact: Producers may apply for their own program or they can contract with an existing USDA-approved Process Verified Program to participate in verification programs under their umbrella.

Myth: USDA verification programs are expensive and time consuming.
Fact: Depending on the method of verification, the costs may be very low. USDA announced that onsite audits for producers are no longer mandatory. That means faster approvals and reduced verification costs.

Myth: USDA verification programs require a lot of paperwork.
Fact: Most producers are able to participate in programs using production records they normally keep for their own production purposes.

Myth: All producers must be audited by USDA.
Fact: All producers are not audited by USDA but rather by USDA-approved PVP companies. It is possible that USDA will visit a producer while conducting audits on approved PVP companies.

Myth: All producers must be evaluated onsite prior to approval.
Fact: USDA-approved PVP companies must evaluate producers to assess their level of risk. Producers can then be evaluated onsite, offsite (through a phone interview and a review of production records and other supporting documentation), or not approved.

Myth: Farmers/Feeders cannot be considered producers.
Fact: Farmers/Feeders are considered producers as long as they limit their operations to finishing their own animals. They must have a closed herd and not purchase animals from other sources; otherwise, they will be considered feedyards.

Myth: All age and source verified cattle are accepted for export verification markets.
Fact: No. To qualify for export verification markets, age must be verified by USDA. Not all commercially verified age and source cattle qualify.

Dispelling the Myths About Verification Programs

Myth: National Animal Identification System (NAIS) Premises ID is required to participate in USDA verification programs.

Fact: NAIS Premises IDs standardize physical location of livestock and is the foundation of NAIS. Premises registration is voluntary; AMS encourages participation in NAIS but it is not a requirement for eligibility in the PVP and QSA Programs.

Myth: Brands cannot be used as an acceptable form of identification.
Fact: Brands may be used as the primary form of identification at a farm/ranch when there is only one defined calving season and when no outside calves are purchased and brought onto the farm/ranch. When marketed the animals must be moved directly from the farm/ranch of origin to a USDA-approved supplier with an approved tagging procedure. Animals must receive an ear tag upon arrival at the approved supplier.

Myth: Calves must be identified with an RFID tag.
Fact: RFID and EID tags are not required to participate in the programs. Calves can be identified with ranch tags, and, in some instances, brands may be used to identify cattle.

Myth: All PVP Programs require Program Compliant Tags (PCT).
Fact: PCTs are not a requirement but can be used in both PVP and QSA Programs. When PCTs are applied at the farm/ranch of origin, producers have the most flexibility in marketing animals with age, source, or breed claims because once the tags are applied and the data recorded into the approved system, the animals may be marketed through USDA-approved or unapproved suppliers. At any point in the animal life-cycle, a supplier can verify the animals are still eligible for inclusion in a USDA-approved program for age, source, or breed.

Myth: Program compliant and non-program compliant animals cannot be commingled.
Fact: Animals verified for age, source, breed, and, in some cases, the Non-Hormone Treated Cattle (NHTC) Program, may be commingled with non-program animals as long as they are properly identified.

What is keeping you from participating?

You may already have what it takes to participate in a verification program. The majority of producers currently maintain all of the records necessary.

You can determine whether you qualify if you already maintain the following records:

1. **Calving season**—Dates of first and last calves born in a calf book, on a calendar, or other production record.
2. **Groups of cattle**—For multiple calving seasons, distinction of animals in each group and date of births.
3. **Artificial insemination**—Semen purchases and servicing dates.
4. **Calf identification**—Brands, ear tags, or both.
5. **Purchase from other sources.**
6. **Method of marketing**—Auction market, back grounding, or direct to a feedyard.

How do you get started? Visit
www.ams.usda.gov/lsg/arc/audit.htm
or call 540-361-7640

What are the different roles of AMS and other USDA Agencies?

The mission of the **Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)** is to facilitate the strategic marketing of agricultural products in domestic and international markets. AMS works cooperatively with its sister agencies, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). AMS activities extend beyond regulatory requirements to address market needs for livestock, meat, and meat products.

APHIS' mission is to protect the health and value of American agriculture and natural resources. A top priority for APHIS is implementing the voluntary National Animal Identification System (NAIS) to assist in safeguarding U.S. livestock and poultry in the event of an outbreak. NAIS is made up of three parts: premises registration, animal identification, and animal tracing.

FSIS protects public health through food safety and defense. FSIS is USDA's public health agency responsible for ensuring that the Nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged. FSIS regulates the Non-Hormone Treated Cattle Program and the Export Verification Programs.