

## **Dairy Beef: Maximizing Quality & Profit**

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Dairy producers ship milk, however, they are in the beef business too! Dairy cows represent a major source of beef. Cows marketed to slaughter can represent up to 15% of a dairy's income and the western states alone, over 800,000 dairy cows worth about \$500 million are marketed to slaughter every year. New demands on meat packers as a result of Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point plan implementation have sharpened the focus of their attention on the quality of cattle coming into the packing plants.

In response to this increased attention by packers to the quality of incoming beef and dairy beef cattle arriving at their plants, the development of a distance learning program was initiated by Dr. Dale Moore at the University of California Davis, School of Veterinary Medicine. She was supported in this program by dairy scientist, veterinarians and media specialists from seven western states. The purpose of the program is to educate dairy producers, farm advisors and dairy veterinarians on the issues in market cattle food safety and quality as well as to provide tools for assessing and certifying on-farm quality assurance programs. The program consists of a number of educational segments including videos, slide sets and written materials. The design of the course will allow moving through the segments at any desired pace and order while providing access to more specific information and resources about market cattle food safety and quality. The program was sponsored by the University of California, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the California Dairy Quality Assurance Program, USDA-FSIS: ADEC and Phillip Morris.

We believe that there many important reasons for completing this program. First the continuation of beef markets for dairy cattle may well depend in the future on the quality of the dairy cows that are arriving for slaughter and assurance that they are residue free. Currently some packers are beginning to turn away cows from dairies with a record of previous residues. As we are all aware, there is increasing public concern for the quality and safety of all types of meat including dairy beef. If consumers believe that there is a risk to their safety from beef, the reality is that even though it may not be true, they will likely reduce their consumption. As we have heard so many times, their perception is really their reality! The packer interview will provide a look into the concerns of the industry. Your market for dairy cows will increasingly depend on meeting the expectations of the packers and consumers. Just like the milk shipped of your dairy, the market dairy cows are food. They become food just as soon as the decision is made to send them to market. As you will find out from the Mr. Food video, dairy cows become much more than hamburger at the meat processing plants. In the future, the condition and quality of the dairy cows shipped to market and the amount of those cows that can be

used for higher quality meat cuts will significantly influence their value. All these reasons strongly suggest that the continued existence of the dairy beef market depends on how the dairy industry responds to the changing expectations of the beef packers and consuming public.

There are seven sections to the program of which five must be completed to obtain certification\*. Section One\* (35 minutes) contains the reasons for participating in this educational program that are supported by a Mr. Food video, a video interview with a packer, a virtual tour of a packing plant video and an introduction to HACCP. Section Two\* (15 minutes) looks into why dairy cows might be condemned and this can be avoided. Section Three\* (20 minutes) explores both drug and toxin residue avoidance by providing a video on the reasons for and tools to address residues on your dairy. Section Four\* (20 minutes) discusses prevention of carcass defects that can result in excessive trim at the slaughter plant and ways to reduce quality defects in dairy cows going to slaughter. Section Five\* (30 minutes) presents information on reduction of biological risks from market cows from potentially harmful bacteria found on dairies. This section also contains information on prudent use of antibiotic on dairy to reduce the risk of development of antibiotic resistant bacteria. As noted by the “\*”, these five sections are the required portion of the dairy beef program.

Two additional sections contain more valuable information, however, while completion of these sections is encouraged, it is not required for certification. Section Six (15 minutes) provides ideas on improving the carcass quality of dairy cows on the dairy prior to shipment for slaughter to increase the value of the cow. Section Seven (15 minutes) allows the participants to give feedback on the course design and delivery. This section also provides an optional tool for assessing your risks. Each section includes a short quiz that is emailed to the course moderator upon completion. Once all the quizzes have been received and a successful score obtained on each section quiz, a certificate of completion will be emailed back to the participant.

This program is a distance learning program designed for the adult learner. It is located on the internet at <http://dairybeef.ucdavis.edu>. On the website, various computer options are available to the user to maximize the abilities of their computer to use the slide sets and videos. Once the program is accessed on the internet, it can be used interactively by an individual dairyman or presented to a larger audience by a dairy professional. All segments of the program can be downloaded for use by dairymen for use on personal computers or as handout materials. For certification, however, the quizzes have to be completed over the internet.

In summary, the Dairy Beef: Maximizing Quality and Profits program is a web-based, internet educational package designed to help dairymen understand the coming changes that will significantly influence their dairy beef markets. It explains the reasons for completing the program and the anticipated benefits for quality assurance and food safety. The program is self-paced with feedback at the completion of each of the seven sections. Individuals or groups can view the programs and it is anticipated the dairy professionals will use this tool for education of dairymen and their workers as a part of dairy quality assurance programs.