QUALITY ASSURANCE:  
STRENGTHENING THE CHAIN OF WHOLESOME FOOD PRODUCTION

Sue Hoffman, Nevada 4-H Events and Activities Manager

It is vital that anyone involved with the production of animals, which will become a food source, is knowledgeable and trained in the care and management of the animals they are responsible for. The basic information needed is the same whether that producer is a large-scale rancher or a young person with a single animal as a 4-H project. All livestock producers have a responsibility to humanely care for, feed, manage and market animals to guarantee a quality food product that is wholesome for consumers.

A livestock producer must develop a total quality management program that always keeps the end result in mind - focusing on the consumer. Producers must use all of their resources (human, animal, and environmental) effectively and efficiently to produce a product that meets or exceeds the customers’ expectations and to always improve. The producer also must remain aware of humane concerns. Not only does the public want a safe product, they want the animals to safely and humanely cared for.

The objective of food animal quality assurance is to minimize or eliminate quality defects and ensure the production of a predictable, safe and wholesome product. This means feeding the animal properly, using proper vaccine and antibiotic injection techniques, correctly using only FDA approved vaccines and medications and adhering to required withdrawal periods prior to processing the animal.

Directives of those outside of the industry determine more and more of what livestock producers can do. To be proactive it is appropriate that livestock producers utilize their own Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) approach to identify the most important potential problems with animal products, how to prevent those problems (critical control point determination). This includes monitoring whether those things are being done and whether we are preventing the potential problems.

There have been a number of materials developed specifically for imparting this knowledge to youth and adult producers. Sources that are available include: Total Quality Management (TQM) Curriculum for Youth Producers – produced by Iowa State University and the University of Nebraska; Quality Assurance and Animal Care Youth Education Program – produced by The Ohio State University, Washington State University, and Oregon State University; Quality Assurance materials from the National Cattleman’s Beef Association; and Quality Assurance materials from the National Pork Producers Council.

References:

Quality Assurance: Strengthening the Chain of Wholesome Food Production; Produced by Jeff Goodwin, Ph.D.; Goodwin Educational Video; 1997.

Quality Assurance and Animal Care Youth Education Program, The Ohio State University, Washington State University, and Oregon State University, 1994.