

GEP-Free Program Overview for Cow-Calf Producers

What is the GEP-Free Program?

The Canadian Growth Enhancing Products Free (GEP-Free) Program was developed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to certify producers of hormone-free beef intended for sale both domestically and abroad. Cow-calf producers and feedlot operators who are interested in producing hormone-free beef for export to the European Union must be GEP-Free certified in order to access export quotas overseas. Historically, this program has been overseen and executed by the CFIA, however, incorporation of third-party certification services such as Verified Beef Production Plus (VBP+) is being considered to expediate and streamline enrollment and auditing activities.



What do I need to do to become GEP-Free certified?

Producers must operate under the specific production requirements outlined below to obtain and maintain GEP-Free certification, including following specific record keeping, chain of custody, feeding, and transportation guidelines. In addition to this, on farm assessments must be conducted at least once annually to ensure continued compliance.

Cattle Requirements

- To participate in the program, cattle must not have been administered any GEPs over their lifetime or have changed ownership or control over relevant management practices
- If animals lose tags they must be physically inspected and have their records reviewed to confirm they were never fed GEPs
- A physical inspection of GEP-Free animals' ears to check for implants must occur and be recorded any time animals are shipped, received, or have tags replaced. This includes when receiving animals from community pasture/forestry reserve grazing
- The presence of approved tags must be confirmed any time animals are being loaded for transport to ensure program eligible animals are not shipped with non-eligible animals
- Animal records, including an Animal Inventory, must be maintained from birth detailing the animal's CFIA tag, alternate identification (if any), transfer certificate number, and transfer date

Management Requirements

- A current Organizational Chart must be maintained detailing which persons are responsible for different elements of the GEP-Free Program
- Training Records must be kept for any individuals outside of the owner who are responsible for GEP-Free program tasks
- All GEP-Free Program records (including certificates of compliance, enrollment forms, transfer certificates, animal inventories, etc.) must be kept for a minimum of 3 years from the date of birth of the calves
- If purchasing mixed feeds or feed supplements from a commercial feed mill, a letter of guarantee must be obtained from the mill indicating the feed does not contain GEPs
- When animals are removed from the program for any reason, they must be segregated from program animals according to a written Segregation/Alternate Identification Plan and records must be amended to document this occurrence
- Lost and replacement tags must be documented on a Tag Replacement Report and reported to the CFIA/ATQ and animal inventory must be adjusted to reflect any changes
- If intending to use a community pasture or forestry reserve, a written Control Program must be submitted and approved BEFORE animals are moved. Only community pastures/forestry reserves where no GEPs are available/used are acceptable and an affidavit must be obtained from the pasture owner/operator to confirm this before animals are moved. Alternate identification must be used for all GEP-Free animals on community pastures/forestry reserves
- All records must be made available to any program auditor, CFIA official, or EU official upon request

Additional Requirements for Mixed Status Operations

Mixed Status operations are farms or feedlots which have a combination of eligible and non-eligible animals or that have or use GEPs on the premises. Mixed Status operations are subject to additional rules and requirements as outlined below:

- Operators must declare whether they are Mixed Status at the time of enrollment
- A written Alternate Identification and/or Segregation program must be developed to ensure GEP-Free animals are easily distinguished from non-program animals and are not shipped or included with non-program animals at any time
- A manual of procedures must be developed and maintained regarding types of GEPs on the premises and the procedures for their use and timing of their use
- A Tracking System for the purchase, receiving, usage, and disposal of GEPs must be documented and maintained
- If producing mixed feeds containing GEPs on farm, you must be able to demonstrate GEP-Free feeds mixed onsite contain no GEP residues and detailed procedures to ensure compliance must be documented in a written program
- A Segregation Plan must be developed, implemented, and monitored to prevent eligible animals from being fed and/or accessing feeds containing GEPs



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