



HANDY ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST FOR VBP+

Producer commitments enhance confidence in Canadian beef

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have become the anchor of industrial and food production process. They clearly establish expectations and outcomes of a production unit and are a simple way for all involved to understand both.

SOPs are important to the Verified Beef Production (VBP) program. Started as on-farm food safety, the SOPs identified industry-sanctioned practices which are outcome-based. That included proper withdrawal times for medications and proper injection methods.

In 2016 VBP expanded to become VBP+, with modules for biosecurity, animal care and environment. SOPs are now established for all four modules of VBP+. These will be a key part of a new generation of Canadian beef sustainability programming.

PRODUCER COMMITMENTS

As a simple reference, VBP+ has established a checklist with a section for each SOP. Some of the most important to building consumer trust are related to the environment. The checklist is a statement of commitment of each producer and simple language to explain management of their own operation or their industry. Here's a sample:

Grassland, riparian areas and watersheds will be protected. Land will be managed to maintain or improve soil health, protect watersheds and riparian areas. Beneficial practices for wildlife habitat will be



VBP+ captures positive conservation practices, including reduce, reuse and recycle principles.

scored. As practices evolve that enhance carbon sequestration and mitigate greenhouse gas, the program will capture what is done. Many existing practices will contribute in this area and will be noted as some of the positive and proactive practices.

Deadstock management. Deadstock will be disposed of in a way that avoids leaching into water bodies.

EFPs provide awareness. An Environmental Farm Pan (EFP) provides awareness for stewardship and conservation practices. While not required, having one is a simple way to capture details and give easy information about practices that conserve energy, adapt innovation or enhance stewardship.

Manage manure and soil nutrients. Manure will be stored and used in a controlled manner that benefits the soil and

protects against leaching of nutrients into water bodies and groundwater.

Chemical storage and use. Herbicides, pesticides, solvents and treated seed will be stored to avoid contamination of cattle feed or water. Products will be used according to label instructions. People know what to do in the case of accidental spills.

Expert help available. If an accidental breach affects water, soil or air, consideration is given on contacting an outside expert if needed.

Team communications. Family and staff understand the tasks related to responsible land management practices.

Biosecurity is important. Managers know what to do in a disease emergency or who to call. Cleaning precautions are taken with anyone who has travelled internationally. And cattle will not be exposed to raw human sewage.

SOP CHECKLIST ONLINE

The complete checklist for SOPs in all four VBP+ modules is available online. It is a good overview of expectations for a sustainable beef industry. Ask for a copy from your regional VBP+ co-ordinator.

The most value from these checklists comes from participating in VBP+. Producers want to do the right thing. Identifying practices that contribute to a healthy and wholesome product is a cornerstone.