



**Sask Verified Beef Production
Provincial Coordinator
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For immediate release

Verified Beef Production program adapting in Saskatchewan

June 10, 2015. Canada's On-Farm Food Safety program for beef cattle, the Verified Beef Production (VBP) program, continues to work with beef cattle producers throughout the country and within Saskatchewan to enhance consumer confidence in Canadian beef. The industry led national VBP program has had over 10 years of experience working with and representing the beef industry and its producers on the topic of On-Farm Food Safety. The program was developed out of the Quality Starts Here program in an adaptive and progressive approach to help enhance consumer confidence in Canadian beef, while educating the producer in On-Farm Food Safety practices. This progressive approach has led the national program to continue to adapt to ensure it can provide a versatile and sustainable program to beef producers in Canada and resulted in the creation of VBP Plus.

VBP Plus is currently in the pilot stages, and is focusing on the addition of three new modules - Biosecurity, Animal Care, and Environmental Stewardship - to the foundational On-Farm Food Safety program. The intent of VBP Plus is to provide a voluntary auditable system to the beef industry that will cover a whole suite of entities related to sustainable beef production. "The beef industry and its producers in Canada provide many benefits to the environment and society that have the potential to add value and enhance confidence in beef products. VBP Plus will help make this connection," explains Coy Schellenberg, Provincial Coordinator for Sask VBP. The pilot will help determine the details and direction of the national program as it evolves into its new framework.

McDonald's is also working on its Verified Sustainable Beef (VSB) program in Canada, which is also in its pilot stages. They will be working with the Canadian beef industry to develop a program that works for all stakeholders along the beef value chain. The program is directly linked to many stakeholders, including the VBP Plus program, as part of the verification system and the defining sustainability process. "I am excited about the opportunities that the McDonald's sustainability program could potentially create for so many sectors of the Canadian beef industry," states Schellenberg.

In Saskatchewan, Sask VBP is also adapting to poise itself in a position ready to be a part of the national VBP Plus program. The Beef Biosecurity program was developed and implemented in 2014. The development of this program was a joint effort of both the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture and Sask VBP working together to increase disease prevention in beef cattle, while pursuing a direction in line with the national VBP Plus program. "Biosecurity is simply disease prevention and is becoming increasingly important on beef operations in terms of our production potential and inefficiencies," says Schellenberg. In Saskatchewan, beef producers who take the Beef Biosecurity workshop may be eligible for funding to work with their veterinarians to conduct a biosecurity assessment and develop preventative practices (50% up to \$1,000).

The On-Farm Food Safety funding assistance program in Saskatchewan has recently been updated as well. From the request of industry, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture has responded with the development of a **new** funding category for VBP registered producers. The new funding category will provide an opportunity for VBP registered producers to access funding toward the purchase of eligible food safety equipment (50% up to \$2,000). The equipment that is eligible remains the same as it has been in the past for the original equipment food safety funding program (50% up to \$750 toward neck extenders, individual weigh scales, recordkeeping software, etc.). VBP registered producers will be able to access the original \$750 equipment food safety funding, plus this new certified equipment food safety funding of \$2,000. (Note: under this certified equipment funding category, maximums are limited to \$750 per neck extender).

More information on VBP is available at www.saskvbp.ca - *redesigned website!*

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