



News Release

Verified Beef Production Plus Program officially launched

June 15, 2016

Calgary, AB - After months of hearing about the benefits of the Verified Beef Production Plus (VBP+) program, producers can now see for themselves how validating their sustainable production practices provides opportunity to proactively share their stories with consumers and beef retailers.

Officially launched today, the new, national VBP+ program includes training and auditing for animal care, biosecurity and environmental stewardship along with on-farm food safety practices within the cow-calf and feedlot sectors. Through validating sustainable practices at the primary production level, VBP+ enables producers to publicly demonstrate their commitment to responsible stewardship of both cattle and resources.

The level of transparency VBP+ offers on a range of key production practices provides retailers and consumers with the knowledge that the beef they purchase is from a healthy animal raised with appropriate oversight and care on the farm, ranch or feedlot. These essential attributes are applicable throughout the beef production supply chain and are captured in a new impactful VBP+ logo.

VBP+ shows that Canadian beef producers are listening, said Alberta rancher and Chair of the producer-led VBP+ Transition Management Committee Cecilie Fleming. "Being a VBP+ registered producer enables beef operations to showcase the good production practices they commit to on their farms, ranches and feedlots as well as fosters continual improvements. VBP+ is a straightforward, practical and low cost program to implement yet contains the robust validation required to satisfy the retailer, other end users, and consumer needs. A voluntary program, VBP+ allows registered operations to be part of a bigger picture of raising beef cattle that can flow into the growing Canadian sustainable beef supply stream," she said.

VBP+ is an expansion of the former Verified Beef Production on-farm food safety program. Work began in late 2013 to expand the program to include production practices validation in all areas of the beef production supply chain. National delivery and oversight of VBP+ maintains a conformance system and streamlines delivery of information, training, online tools and resources. Like the initial program, VBP+ remains voluntary and industry-led.

The VBP+ program has demonstrable and credible threshold levels producers must achieve to become, and maintain, registered status on the program. This progressive, audited program promotes continual improvements at the beef farm, ranch and feedlot level.

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Fleming thanked those beef operators who have embraced and supported the evolution of the program into VBP+. “Expanding the VBP+ program gives beef producers another tool to credibly demonstrate that the beef industry is listening and responding to changing needs of its end users,” she added.

The VBP program grew from its roots in the Quality Starts Here program, an educational initiative started by the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association to help the beef industry move toward the highest beef quality in the world.

VBP+ is operated by the Beef Cattle Research Council. Funds to develop and deliver VBP+ are provided through the Canadian Beef Cattle Check-off and Agriculture Canada's AgriMarketing Program - Assurance Systems Stream of Growing Forward 2.

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VBP+ Backgrounder

Verified Beef Production Plus (VBP+) is a producer-led, forward-looking program that is focused on enabling industry to anticipate and meet emerging and growing demands for beef production systems throughout the Canadian beef value chain.

VBP+ is the next evolution of the Canadian beef industry's long-standing on-farm food safety program (formerly Verified Beef Production or VBP). The Canadian beef industry’s HACCP based program, VBP was developed by industry in 2004 to validate responsible on-farm practices. The VBP initiative itself grew from the Quality Starts Here program, an educational initiative started by the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association (CCA) and the genesis of the CCA policy on prudent drug use developed in 1994.

Work to expand the national program offering and enhance provincial delivery across all provinces was initiated in late 2013 to address growing consumer demands for transparent, accountable, and sustainable beef production.

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VBP+ links on-farm recording and auditing of animal care, biosecurity and environmental stewardship practices with the established Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) recognized on-farm food safety (VBP) program to help meet demands for sustainable beef production at the farm, ranch and feedlot level.

VBP+ is aligned with the national Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle, the Canadian Beef Cattle On-Farm Biosecurity Standard, and the sustainability indicator work of the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB) to ensure sound animal care, biosecurity and environment principles and practices.

Through this program depth VBP+ provides the transparency required to make sustainable beef production meaningful to consumers and contribute to demand for Canadian beef in both domestic and international markets.

Registered VBP+ beef farms, ranches and feedlots will be able to provide proof of their sustainable practices and be well-positioned to feed into Canada's sustainability program once the CRSB verification framework is complete.

The program is building the capacity to communicate with the Beef InfoXchange System (BIXS), enabling easy identification of cattle coming from a VBP+ registered operation. This capability with BIXS, and potentially other programs, ensures registered VBP+ producers can capitalize on the benefits of beef value chain connectivity.

Producers participating in VBP+ will continue to enhance the Canadian Beef Advantage, demonstrating that Canadian beef products are high quality and safe, and are produced in systems that prioritize animal welfare and the environment.

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