

Age and Source Verification

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Age and source verification can provide the cow-calf producer with the opportunity to add value to their calves with the possibility of receiving a premium at the time of sale. Research conducted by Superior Livestock indicates that in 2008, sellers of Age and Source Verified (ASV) calves received an average of \$3.70 CWT premium.

Enrolling in a program that can provide options for ASV requires some research and planning on the producer's part. The producer should research all available options. Avoid programs that require wholesale changes to management practices or to the operation in general.

There are two program options: Process Verified Program (PVP) or a Quality System Assessment (QSA)

- PVP's verify specific processes that are supported with documentation, they are usually administered by a 3rd party, provide more marketing flexibility, verify age and source, and can verify other attributes such as natural or hormone free depending on the PVP.
- QSA's verify specific product requirements, only verify age and source, in most cases are administered by a particular packer or feedlot, and marketing is restricted to the administrator of the QSA.

It is vitally important to consider the cost of enrolling in a program. In general, direct costs for both PVP and QSA are:

- Enrollment fees
- Training fees
- Data entry fees
- RFID tag costs (nearly all PVP's and QSA's require RFID tags be applied to all verified animals)

There are also indirect costs such as time and labor to collect data and apply tags to enrolled animals.

Producers have the option of verifying a group of calves, those from a single calving season, or individual ASV for each calf born on the operation. Records that will be required to be shared with the 3rd party verifier are determined by the type of ASV the producer elects to utilize. For "group" verifications the birth dates of the first and last calf born are required. For "individual" verification the birth date, sex and individual identification of each calf is required.

In summary:

- It has been proven that ASV calves receive a premium when marketed.
- Selecting an ASV program requires research and planning on the producers' part; avoid those programs that require wholesale changes to either management practices or the operation in general.
 - Visit with other producers who are utilizing ASV, learn from them.
 - Visit with program administrators to determine the particulars of a program.
- There are direct and indirect costs associated with ASV; examine costs closely to determine if the premium received will actually result in a net profit.