



INSIDE THE NEW VBP+ AUDIT

A producer's first audit experience and thoughts for his industry

Manitoba beef producer Barry Brigden is quick to tell you in an interview that there isn't anything unusual about his cow-calf and backgrounding operation.

In many ways that's a fair assessment. He and his family calve out about 300 cows in spring, another 30 or 40 in the fall. And he backgrounds anywhere from the entire calf crop to just replacement heifers, depending on calf prices in the fall.

That beef program is backed by a mixed farm cropping operation designed to grow feed.

One way he does stand out. He was one of the first beef farms to be audited under the newly revised Verified Beef Production Plus (VBP+) program. That audit covers not just on-farm food safety, the original VBP program, but also new modules added for animal care, environment and biosecurity.

How did he fare? Read on.

AUDIT WORRIES

Brigden had heard all of the concerns that come up regarding audits. Privacy. Security. That audits could reveal some things a producer is doing incorrectly. Or that they take a lot of time.

The reality, says Brigden, is the process is simple, not intimidating in the least and not very time consuming.

What sorts of questions did he face?

He thinks a bit in response to that question, not because they were difficult, he is quick to explain, but because they were so straightforward he answered them easily.

"We covered things like animal care and husbandry, environmental practices and biosecurity. And we had a few things pointed out that could be improved, but they were pretty minor," he says.

THINKING CONFIDENTLY

Part of all of this is confidence. Brigden says he has no issues with people having questions because he doesn't think he has anything to hide.

"We spend a lot of time around our yard keeping things neat and tidy. Corrals are cleaned, barn is disinfected. We're careful about having visitors during vulnerable times like calving. It's just what we do here.

"But anybody comes to our place I welcome them to see what we do."

THE PRODUCER BENEFIT

Brigden envisions a day when the efforts for VBP+ pay off better in the marketplace. In the constant search for value, he sells at pre-sort sales. He would like to see a pre-sort sale for VBP+ calves.

"If I had one thought for producers it would be that VBP audits do not cause nervousness. It is really not that intimidating,



Barry Brigden of Souris, Man., found new VBP+ audit simple to do but important for industry.

it's really not that hard. I'm willing to bet everybody I know is already complying and there really isn't much to finish it off and become a certified Verified Beef producer.

"The more of us that are audited, it should be good for markets down the road. It should be beneficial for Canadian beef to have it all verified, grown sustainably, meeting standards for medication, health, care and welfare.

"I think most guys are close so let's jump on board and get it done."



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