



# DON'T LET A BROKEN NEEDLE BECOME A BROKEN PROMISE

Your industry is depending on you

**I**t's a line parents and motivational speakers use often. It's not what happens in life but how you respond that counts.

Not many producers encounter broken needles. But how they and their industry will be measured is in their response.

Melissa Downing wants to make sure that a broken needle doesn't become a broken promise for the industry. A producer herself, Downing is manager for the Verified Beef Production Plus (VBP+) program in Alberta.

Her take is that the solution is a combination of making sure the basics of injection management are followed, and that communications is taken seriously.

## CRITICAL INJECTION BASICS

Here's a quick recap of the basic steps to prevent broken needles on the farm or ranch.

**Restrain cattle securely.** A properly functioning squeeze chute with a neck extender or head restraint allows for effective injections while keeping both handlers and cattle safe.

**Use sharp needles and never straighten a bent needle.** Inspect needles after use to ensure they are intact.

**Use proper needle size and length.** This depends on product viscosity and injection route.

**Consider detectable needles.** They stay sharp longer, are less prone to bending and breaking, and make broken needle detection easier at processing plants.



Improper restraint is one common reason needles break, says Melissa Downing.

**Use proper injection technique.** Give injectable products in the neck and use under the skin (sub-Q or SC) method when identified on the product label.

**Fresh needles.** Try to change needles every 10 animals if vaccinating mature animals, or each time for sick animals.

**Discard properly.** Use sharps containers so cattle, animals or people aren't at risk.

## COMMUNICATION RULES

You have to share knowledge to manage this problem. There isn't much debate on this issue, says Downing. Communications is the direct responsibility of the owner.

"Identify the animal and record the incident on the permanent record. If an animal is being sold, the next owner must be notified

of the broken needle in that specific animal. Simplest is to keep the animal, harvest at a local abattoir and use the meat yourself."

## Watch for buckshot

Packers report cases of buckshot in beef product each year. Likely no fault of the producer but in the consumer's eyes, beef producers are held accountable for producing a safe product.

Like many, Downing is puzzled at how buckshot damage happens. "As an industry we can encourage wildlife organizations to let their members know that this is an issue," she says. "Individual producers can tell hunters not to shoot in the direction of cattle. Avoid grazing cattle on pastures behind hunting blinds or feeding areas for game birds. And never use shotguns for any purpose around animals."

## LEARN THROUGH VBP+

The newly minted VBP+ program in Canada offers an ideal training and coaching environment for young or new producers. It's also great for the most knowledgeable established producers to prove they are meeting requirements. After all, even Gretzky needed a coach.



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