



# THE INSIDE PRODUCER VIEW ON A VBP AUDIT

Manitoba's Van Damme family is now an audit ambassador

Near Baldur, Man. Hilary and Blaine Van Damme run a 300 cow mixed farm. They grow their own feed, background 250 head, finish 50 to 75 head a year and raise their own replacement heifers.

All that adds up to exactly the kind of operation Canada's Verified Beef Production (VBP) program was set up to support.

But the path to VBP participation was not direct for the Van Dammes. The first time they looked into the program it seemed like a lot of recordkeeping, a lot of rules, all a little daunting in fact.

Then in 2012 they took another look. Their province had an incentive program for some handling equipment and it all seemed like a fit.

"The second time it was just so simple, it was common sense," she says. They completed the workshop, then took up the option of a VBP audit.

## THE AUDIT EXPERIENCE

Not many people look forward to an audit. That was certainly true for Hilary and Blaine.

"None of us liked the thought of an audit. It's a scary word and I definitely had some reservations. But our VBP provincial staff was able to field my questions on what would happen, and learning about the process through them made it a whole lot easier.

"I was surprised at how easy the farm audit went, how knowledgeable and practical our auditor was about farm operations,"



Beef production is a family effort for the Van Dammes of Baldur, Man. who say VBP can address consumer expectations.

asays Hilary. "I liked the audit process. It was quick, it was painless and it was relevant.

"It was all common sense details, and there was no hard core regulatory safety issues that you might expect when it comes to being audited under a food safety program."

## LESSONS LEARNED

One of the biggest things the audit did was draw attention to drug withdrawal times. "Now nothing ever gets done on our farm or that our vet does without us asking what is the withdrawal time, and when can this animal be sold?

"We also learned about the compendium of veterinary products available on the Internet. That's a very powerful resource,

very easy to use. We can look up all of the products we ever use on our farm, and have all the information on usage of medications and withdrawals."

## FOOD SAFETY CHAMPIONS

Today Hilary is a strong ambassador for the Verified Beef program, even organizing a course for her local holistic resource management group.

"I'd tell any producer just go and do VBP. We care about these animals, we take care of them and we do our best. Verified Beef does nothing more than to give you the paperwork that I am doing this and I am doing it right."

"In my opinion that's where the consumer end of things is going."