



Record Keeping “It’s the COOL thing to do!”

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There are many reasons why beef producers should keep good records and animal ID. The list starts with the fact that records are a management tool that adds value to your calf crop. Accurate records are also helpful in tax reporting, obtaining credit and yes, even traceability and disease investigation. The current situation with bovine tuberculosis in Minnesota and the requirement of mandatory records has some producers spooked for no reason. Producers need to realize that the most important reason for record keeping is good management not government mandates. Maybe now is a good time to start.

A record keeping system and animal identification plan allows producers to measure production practices for better overall management. To assess how well a management change works, all areas of the operation need to be monitored. For example, weaning weights can be increased by purchasing a bull with high expected progeny difference (EPD) for weaning weight. However, if the operation experiences increased calving difficulties and lower pregnancy rates, the decision probably wasn’t profitable. Producers must record all events before and after the implementation of management strategies in order to determine the full effect.

To gain the most information for overall management, a record keeping system should include financial and profile the natural resource parameters available on the operation, as well as animal production and health data. These records

allow the producer to evaluate how production, profitability and carrying capacity of the operation are interrelated. For example, a cost cutting strategy that decreases harvested feed use may decrease calf production and harm pasture production. The only way to recognize some of these interactions is to have consecutive measurement for the comparison.

Here is another reason to justify the importance of record keeping. Now that the Farm Bill process is over, cattle producers should be ready for the long delayed implementation of Country of Origin Labeling (COOL). The new language states that the use of existing business records whenever possible to minimize the burden on producers. For many cow-calf producers, existing business records will likely fit the bill and producers may have to only offer an affidavit that they have the records to document the origin of the calves they sell. Producers should watch for additional information on COOL as details are finalized in the coming months.

If the items mentioned previously are not enough of an added incentive, thorough record keeping will provide documentation if and when traceability is required on your livestock operation. Effective documentation showing animal inventory, appropriate employee training, proper cattle handling, pharmaceutical product use and storage and individual animal identification are good management practices and the best way to limit and possibly avoid liability. With this type of data already being recorded the additional information that will be

Record keeping requirements for herds in the proposed split-state area

Owners of herds located within a tuberculosis management area must maintain herd records that include a complete inventory of animals, the date of acquisition and a source of each animal that was not born into the herd, the date of disposal and destination of any animal removed from the herd, and all individual identification numbers (from tags, tattoos, electronic implants, etc.) associated with each animal. When animals enter or leave the herd, the names, addresses and telephone numbers of previous or subsequent owners of the animals must be recorded. All records must be maintained for at least 10 years.

Official identification requirements for TB testing cattle and bison in Minnesota

The following can be used as identification when reporting official TB tests on cattle and bison in Minnesota:

- USDA silver metal ear tags: Nine-character alpha-numeric ear tags (e.g. 41ABC9999).



- Brucellosis vaccination ear tags: Nine-character alpha-numeric ear tag (e.g. 41VAX2222).

- Dairy Herd Improvement Association (DHIA) ear tags.
- Electronic Identification (RFID): 15-digit RFID tag with the ID number printed on the tag.



- Tattoos can be used as official ID for registered animals only. The tattoo, along with the breed registry number provides unique identification for each animal. The ear tattoo and the registry number must be included on the TB test chart. An alternative is to record only the tattoo on the test record and attach paperwork to the TB test chart which correlates the tattoo to the breed registry number. The TB test record number (the preprinted number in the upper right hand corner of the TB test record) must be written on any attached paperwork.

If an animal already has official ID when presented for a TB test, that ID should be recorded as the official ID on the TB test record. Additional identification should not be added to the animal. If you have questions please call 1-877 MN TB FREE (668-2373).

required in the proposed split-state area is far less daunting.

The information being required for producers in the proposed split-state area is basic management information that all producers should record:

- A current inventory of all cattle, bison, farmed cervidae and goats;
- Date of acquisition and source for each animal not born into the herd;
- Date of removal and destination of any animal removed from the herd;
- All individual identification numbers for each animal in the herd (see side bar for acceptable forms of identification);
- When animals enter and leave the herd, the name, address

and phone number of previous and or subsequent owners of the animal; and

- All of these records must be maintained for a minimum of 10 years.

Regardless if you use a three ring binder that lives in your truck, the Beef Quality Assurance record system, an Integrated Resource Management (IRM) red book that fits in your shirt pocket or the latest in computer software, beef producers benefit by keeping track of birth dates and weights, breeding and weaning records, vaccination history, general health, animal movement records, purchase and sale records. This type of basic information helps producers make informed decisions about their cattle enterprise. Accurate production records allow producers to operate more efficiently through better manage labor and resources. A sound record keeping system can help you evaluate your operation and measure production processes for better overall management.

There are hundreds if not thousands of record keeping options available today and there is no “one size fits all”. Producers need to select a record keeping system that fits their operation and should never lose sight of the fact that records are meant to simplify your business not create new headaches. The most important factor in selecting a system is to find a method your comfortable with, which allows you to maintain accurate, thorough and timely documentation of your herd health program, nutrition program, animal movements and any other production factors that will impact your operation. If you don’t have a system for keeping records or are interested in ways to improve your current system visit the University of Minnesota Beef Center website at www.extension.umn.edu/beef to view samples and templates for basic beef record keeping system.