

Innovation and Production-Enhancing Technologies

Background

Alberta's feedlot sector is innovative and sophisticated, employing science-based production methods, digital information and data storage technologies, and leading-edge management approaches. Production-enhancing technologies include vaccines, growth implants, beta-agonists, antibiotic treatments, ionophores and other feed-grade antimicrobials, vitamin and mineral feed supplements, and parasite controls. Digital technology includes radio frequency identification (RFID) tags, chute-side computers with animal tracking software, and data storage for record keeping, real-time status, and trace-back. Despite the economic, environmental, and food safety benefits of these technologies, some maintain that more conventional methods (whether termed "natural", "grass-fed", "organic", or "hormone and antibiotic-free") yield a better beef product.

Guiding Principle

The benefits of modern beef production-enhancing technologies are clear, but decisions over which products and technologies to employ must be left to individual cattle feeders and the consumer demand characteristics of the market in which they are engaged. ACFA recognizes that today's consumer demands choice, including the choice of purchasing beef raised in different ways. At the same time, the choices made by consumers influence production practices. As such, ACFA believes it imperative for consumers to make their decisions based on factual information. ACFA believes that real choice is an informed choice.

Position

ACFA is committed to innovation and a science-based approach to beef production, which includes the use of safe, effective, and government-approved products and technologies developed through scientific research, and tested, approved, and licensed through a rigorous evidence-based review process by government scientists and regulators. This system of beef production captures significant economic, environmental, and social benefits.

- *Animal Welfare:* Production-enhancing technologies contribute to the health and well-being of cattle by providing cattle feeders with the opportunity to optimize standards of animal care through a controlled feeding regimen and tools to prevent and treat disease. Modern technology at the feedlot is an investment in the health and well-being of animals.
- *Food Safety and Beef Quality:* Production-enhancing technologies allow cattle feeders to raise healthy and productive animals that yield a safe beef product of consistently high quality.
- *Efficiency and Productivity:* Production-enhancing technology maximizes operational efficiency, lowering the inputs required to produce each pound of beef. Through technology, cattle feeders maximize meat output but minimize the environmental footprint. This lowers costs and enables cattle feeders to deliver safe, high-quality beef at an affordable price to both domestic and international markets.
- *Sustainability:* Investment in a wide range of safe and proven production-enhancing technologies drives value across the beef production chain, boosting international competitiveness, enhancing profitability, maximizing efficiency and production, and improving the economic and environmental sustainability of Alberta's beef industry. Modern beef production benefits animals, consumers, producers, and the environment.

Actions

- Investing in research and projects to improve and expand the suite of current production-enhancing technologies remains a priority research focus for ACFA.
- ACFA will continue to collaborate with industry partners to improve production practices, and will facilitate the participation of its members in projects to develop new products and technologies.
- When opportunities arise, ACFA will communicate the animal care, product quality, and economic and environmental sustainability benefits of modern beef production-enhancing technologies.

Key Messages

- *Cattle feeders use science-based and government-approved beef production technologies to keep cattle healthy and provide consumers with a beef product that is safe, affordable, and of consistently high quality.*
- *Modern beef production-enhancing technologies benefit the animals, the consumer, the producer, and the environment. We will follow best practices as they emerge, and help with development of best practices.*
- *The choices made by consumers influence production practices. As such, ACFA believes it imperative for consumers to make their decisions based on factual information. ACFA believes that real choice is an informed choice.*

Approved by the Board on: November 19, 2015

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