

Dr. Grandin and Curt Pate part of beef quality assurance event

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“When we talk about beef quality assurance it’s completely a producer driven and voluntary program,” said Katy Lippolis, Colorado BQA coordinator. “Our producers want to be kept up to date with these management practices.”

Lippolis explained that the program, based on a set of national guidelines backed by decades of scientific research, had an end goal to protect consumer confidence in beef quality.

Dr. Temple Grandin and Curt Pate, advocates for the humane treatment and handling of livestock, shared their knowledge about stockmanship and stewardship with participants at the workshop on September 5 and 6.



Curt Pate demonstrates how to move cattle in a large pen using proper stockmanship techniques. Pate said the cattle brain has two sides, the gain or growth side and the fear or shrink side. Putting too much pressure on the cattle would activate their fight or flight response, which would cause them to lose weight or in cattleman’s terms shrink. The goal was to capitalize on the cattle’s natural behavior to move them using low-stress techniques. Photo by Dixie Crowe.

They both discussed how producers could use the cattle’s’ natural behavior to create low-stress handling situations. This falls in line with the BQA standards for care and marketplace transparency for consumers.

In her keynote address, Dr. Grandin stressed the importance of creating positive first experiences for the animals and measuring outcomes for specific indicators to prevent bad practices from becoming normal behavior in the industry.



Dr. Temple Grandin gave the keynote speech at the BQA Stockmanship and Stewardship event. Here she explains to the capacity crowd that it is important to make sure animals have good first experiences which sometimes means letting them approach novel objects. Photo by Dixie Crowe.

“If there’s one thing I want you to get out of my talk tonight, I want you measuring handling,” said Dr. Grandin. “The thing that’s good about a very objective based system is that if you audit it or I audit it, we get the same results.”

During the cattle handling portion of the workshop, Mr. Pate demonstrated that our natural inclination to fall in behind the cattle as if we were stepping in line behind another person only served to turn the cattle around to stop and look at us.

“I’ve got to change the way I do things to fit the animal,” said Pate. “It’s not going to change to fit me, I’ve got to change to fit it.”

When Mr. Pate moved in a zig-zag linear pattern behind the cattle, he took advantage of their field of vision which extends in a large peripheral arc on each side. They were able to see him from either side and moved forward in the desired direction while he avoided standing in the blind spot directly behind them.



Curt Pate demonstrates how to use a linear zig-zag pattern behind the cattle so they can see him on either side of their visual arc. He moved them forward with pressure and release based on his physical proximity to them. While he did this on foot, he could apply the same principles from horseback. Photo by Dixie Crowe.

Dr. Grandin demonstrated how to take advantage of the cattle's natural following behavior in her cattle handling system of soft curves and solid walls leading to a squeeze chute. Throughout the process the cattle moved smoothly without fear through the system.



Dr. Grandin walked to the front of the curved alley (part of her cattle handling system that uses natural cattle behavior principles) where she then repositioned herself to walk back past the cattle close to the wall within their flight zone. This caused them to move forward and away from her through the squeeze chute without producing a fear response. Photo by Dixie Crowe.

At the end of the demonstration sessions, Ms. Lippolis drew all the material about stockmanship and stewardship together and showed how it was interwoven into the BQA goal: to promote thoughtful, responsible cattle management. Participants took a test about the material and became BQA certified as part of the event.



Katy Lippolis, Colorado BQA coordinator, demonstrates the proper skin tenting technique and area for injections on a cow during the workshop. BQA guidelines require producers to keep accurate vaccination records and inject cattle in the triangle area of the neck in front of the shoulder, which is painted green on the demonstration cow. Note that the cow has one ear directed at Ms. Lippolis and she falls within the cow's arc of vision. The cow is relaxed and not showing any signs of fear. Photo by Dixie Crowe.



Participants had a stewardship session with veterinarian Dr. Rob Callan, CSU Livestock Specialist. He went over how to recognize early signs of cattle becoming ill such as standing away from the group, droopy ears, and mucus from the nose. Using a demonstration cow restrained in a squeeze chute, Dr. Callan was able to point out ways to check for dehydration, take a rectal temperature, listen to heart rate and weigh the results against environmental factors such as hot weather in order to make an informed phone call to a veterinarian for treatment. Photo by Dixie Crowe.



Bill DeMoss, President of Mountain Vet Supply, showed the array of vaccines available to cattle producers and discussed their proper handling, storage and dosing. Improper cattle handling techniques that trigger a fear response, exposing live vaccines to UV light and keeping vaccines in an unheated shop even in a refrigerator causing them to freeze are just some of the ways that vaccines can be rendered ineffective. Photo by Dixie Crowe.



The BQA Stockmanship and Stewardship event held at Colorado State University's Agricultural Research and Education facility north of Fort Collins drew a maximum capacity crowd of 140 participants made up of undergraduates, vet students and cattle producers. Photo by Dixie Crowe.