



SIMPLE. PRACTICAL. TRUSTED.

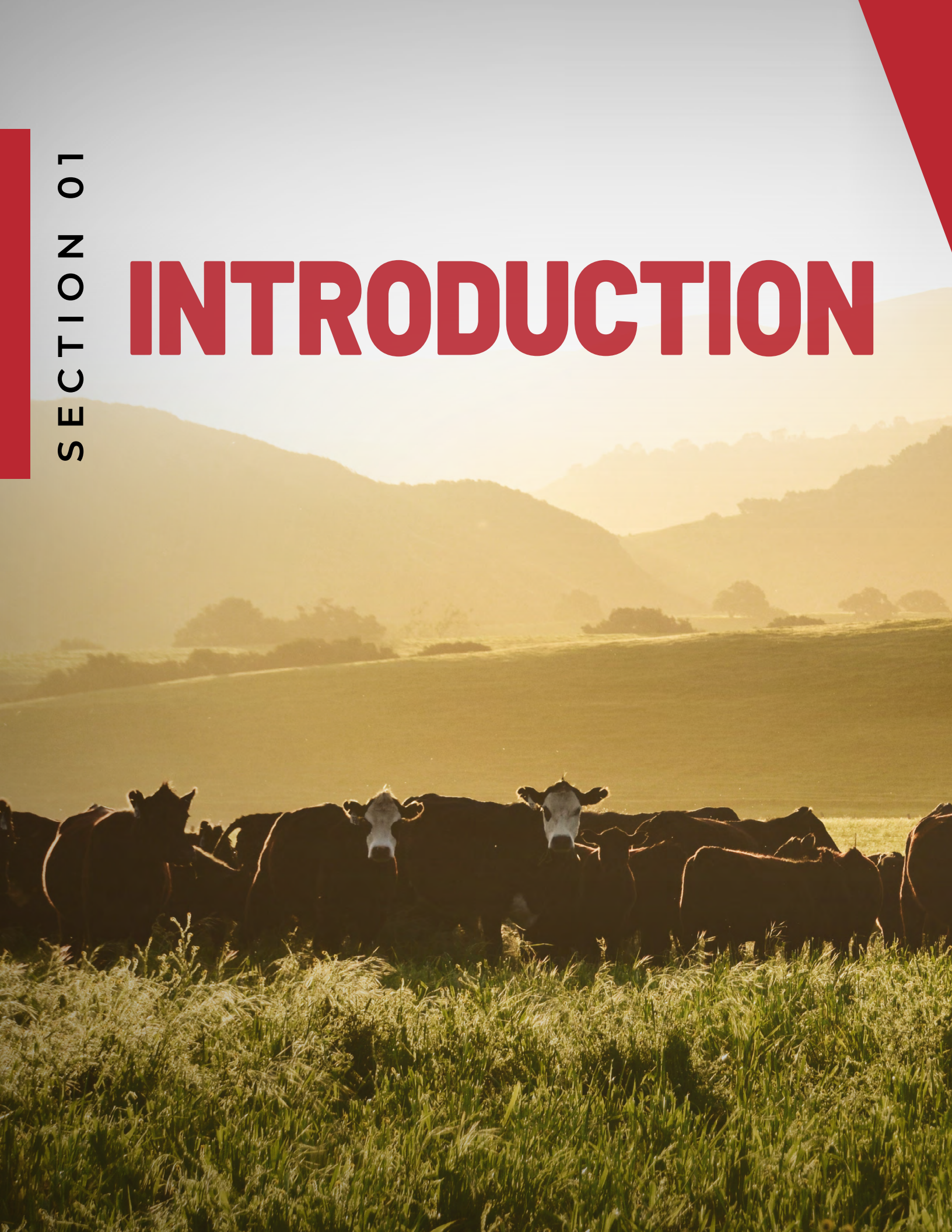
# SECTION 01 INTRODUCTION

VBP+ PRODUCER  
REFERENCE MANUAL



SECTION 01

# INTRODUCTION





# VERIFIED BEEF PRODUCTION PLUS (VBP+)

## VBP+ PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

## VBP+ CERTIFICATION PROCESS

## VBP+ PROGRAM CORE PRINCIPLES





# 01 VERIFIED BEEF PRODUCTION PLUS (VBP+)



**SIMPLE  
PRACTICAL  
TRUSTED**

This producer reference manual was put together by incorporating important information from the previous VBP+ Producer Manual, the National Farm Animal Care Council Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle, the Canadian Beef Cattle Biosecurity Standard and Implementation Manual, and the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef Producer Interpretive Guide and Producer Standard.



“This program means that we can take credit for what we’re doing or be ready if a market requires it.”

**Cecilie Fleming, VBP+ Certified Producer  
and VBP+ Management Committee Chair**

The VBP+ program is centered around the VBP+ Standard, which was built by producers for producers, using industry recognized standards, codes and best management practices. VBP+, under the umbrella of the Beef Cattle Research Council, a division of the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association, engages in two main activity streams: producer training and certification.

VBP+ Training provides value by improving awareness of responsible beef production and continuing education. Producers who engage in training not only benefit from best management practices on their own operations, but also demonstrate to the public and stakeholders the commitment of the Canadian beef industry to food safety, quality, and sustainable beef practices.

VBP+ Certification is proof that best management practices for food safety and sustainability are implemented on-farm. Producers who commit to certification are recognized by stakeholders and can participate in various value-added programs. This is accomplished by keeping detailed on-farm records, implementing written management plans, and completing an on-farm audit and ongoing records assessment reviews.

As a result, VBP+ producers can uphold consumer confidence in the safety, quality, and sustainability of the Canadian beef they produce.

# 02 VBP+ PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS



Producers are expected to have basic knowledge and experience in beef cattle production and a general understanding of Provincial and Federal regulations and requirements. VBP+ Certified cattle operations must prioritize and integrate the five major components of VBP+:

- 1 ON-FARM FOOD SAFETY
- 2 BIOSECURITY
- 3 ANIMAL CARE
- 4 ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP
- 5 COLLECTIVE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, TRAINING, MENTORING, WORKPLACE AND COMMUNITY

These five components are interconnected with management practices identified throughout the VBP+ program.

The VBP+ Operation requirements are:

- ✓ A valid and active Vet-Client-Patient Relationship must be in place between the VBP+ producer and a veterinarian or veterinary clinic.
- ✓ Animal identification process is in place that enables accurate health and treatment records to be documented for each animal or group which can be reproduced and shared.
- ✓ Documentation and record keeping of all activities that may impact food safety and quality (records available for audit purposes)
- ✓ Basic knowledge and understanding of animal care practices and the prioritization of animal welfare when handling and treating cattle.
- ✓ Basic knowledge and understanding of environmental stewardship practices and the prioritization of the protection and maintenance of soil, water and air quality.





# 03 VBP+ CERTIFICATION PROCESS

VBP+ certification means you have successfully completed the training and an audit of on-farm practices. You will receive a numerical score, audit report card & certificate after the audit is completed.

One of the fundamental concepts of VBP+ is continual improvement in all aspects of beef cattle production. Throughout this manual, self-assessment boxes are provided for each section to help track progress towards a successful audit.

The minimum score required at audit is highlighted in each box. Self-assessment topics are categorized as either VBP+ Standard or VBP+ Required. The VBP+ Standard category requires a minimum audit score of 1, indicating that the producer understands the concept and shows consideration for record-keeping. The VBP+ Required category requires a minimum score of 2, representing topics that are considered Critical Control Points. For these topics, records are required for certification. Failing to meet the minimum score in either category at audit will trigger a Corrective Action Request with a timeline for completion. However, moving through this manual, scores don't count. The self-assessment boxes are there to help track opportunities for improvement before attempting an audit to ensure successful certification.

## The following must be in place for VBP+ certified operations:

- ✓ At least one person trained in VBP+ program
- ✓ Others working on the operation understand the VBP+ requirements and can relate it to their own tasks.
- ✓ Everyone with responsibility in the operation has a working knowledge of the VBP+ principles and could answer questions related to their responsibilities.
- ✓ A designated person in the operation to annually review the records and ensure they are complete, signed (when applicable) and dated.
- ✓ Someone responsible for managing and mentoring staff who are expected to be trained on what is expected.
- ✓ Process in place to communicate with personnel in the event of an error or mishap, is in order to educate and prevent future incidents.

## HOW TO BECOME VBP+ CERTIFIED





# 04 VBP+ PROGRAM CORE PRINCIPLES



## 1 ON FARM FOOD SAFETY

Food safety is a basic expectation of consumers, which producers must ensure throughout their involvement in the beef production process. The two main on-farm food safety risks for beef are:

- 1) Chemical residue contamination of the product. This may include animal health products, pesticides and herbicides, toxins and prohibited feed materials.
- 2) Physical safety hazard in the product. This can include a broken needle, buck shot, or other foreign body.

VBP+ producers help secure food safety on farm by keeping accurate and up-to-date records that of application of or incidental exposure to chemical or physical contaminants that are diligently checked.

By keeping accurate and up-to-date health and production records, VBP+ producers help secure food safety by managing incidents of accidental treatments or exposure to chemical or physical contaminants by adhering to calculated withdrawal dates or removing animals from the food supply chain.

## 2 QUALITY BEEF

The high quality of Canadian beef products forms the basis of consumer demand and trade, and contributes significantly to competitiveness with other beef exporters and protein sources in the world market. Canada successfully produces a youthful, lean, commodity beef product based primarily on a grain-based feedlot production system; and our beef grading scheme rewards these characteristics.

Consumer perception of quality beef combines many different attributes. Although consumers are familiar with the relationship between high marbling grade and eating quality, beef quality often includes much more. Today's consumers are looking for assurance that beef cattle are raised in production systems that adhere to principles that ensure food safety, protect the environment and uphold animal welfare. VBP+ Certified operations provide assurance that their cattle are raised following production practices that meet the standards and definition of beef quality beyond marbling grade.



# 04 VBP+ PROGRAM CORE PRINCIPLES (cont'd)



## 3 ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION

In Canada, all cattle must be identified by a Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) or Agri-Traçabilité Québec (ATQ) approved radio frequency identification (RFID) ear tag when they leave the farm of origin. The RFID tag enables tracking of cattle movements and traceability back to the herd of origin. These tags provide unique, usually permanent, identification for each animal.

Animal identification can also be accomplished by hot iron and freeze brands, tattoos, or wattle and brisket tags. Some of these methods are used to distinguish ownership, rather than individual ID. Animals may also be temporarily identified using spray paint or crayon approved for livestock use (usually used to indicate the animal has had some sort of treatment/procedure or at a sale).

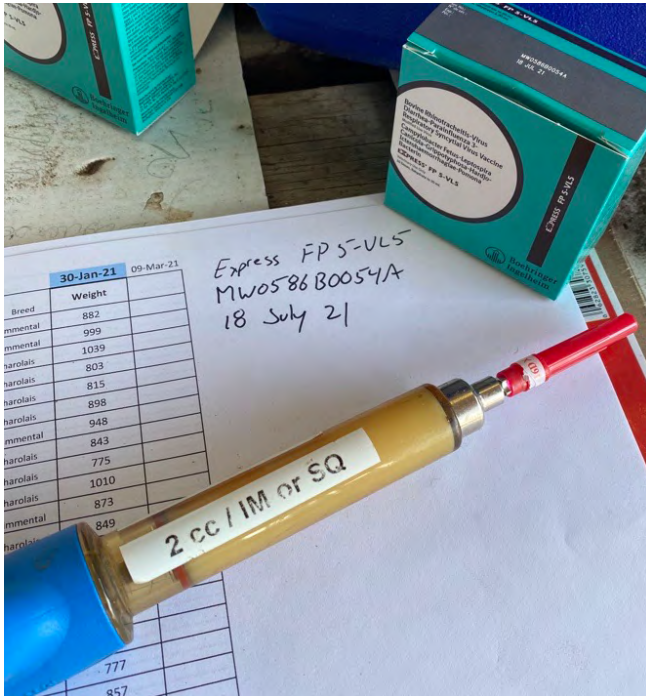
In the VPB+ program, the purpose of animal identification is to clearly link the animal with its treatment, vaccination, or exposure record for the purpose of calculating withdrawal dates and recognizing potential food safety risks. In the case of group treatments, all cattle in the group must be listed and treatment(s) recorded. If cattle are removed from the treatment group, then they must be individually identified and recorded.

A small RFID button in the ear isn't necessarily useful as a visual identifier, so producers often use a dangle-style ear tag to identify cattle on farm. These temporary tags should be cross-referenced with the animal's permanent RFID and recorded. Recording both the nationally recognized RFID and on-farm ID ensures that cattle can be identified in the event of a trace back, and correlated to any health treatments, withdrawal dates or exposures connected to the animal(s) in question.

Producers are encouraged to use individual ID methods and collect production information on each animal which includes genetic, growth, reproductive and health data. These methods can include individualized ear tags or ear tattoos.



# 04 VBP+ PROGRAM CORE PRINCIPLES (cont'd)



## 4 RECORD-KEEPING

Considerable effort is required to maintain records on an individual animal basis. The resulting information helps recognize and efficiently manage herd health problems and can reduce the length and severity of disease outbreaks. Unnecessary treatments may be eliminated, thereby minimizing costs. Records of parentage, reproductive history, and animal source are also useful to identify superior genetics, health risks, and other factors contributing to productivity.

Producers manage their record keeping through many different means: some use software programs available on computers and phones, while others use herd logs and calving books or personalized filing systems. Records should be kept up-to-date, accurate, detailed, and securely stored; and you should be able to pull information from your record keeping system easily.

Throughout this manual, sample templates and examples of filled out records are included to provide a simple format for producers to use that ensures all necessary information is captured. However, record-keeping systems are personal and individualized, so VBP+ producers are welcome to use their own record systems as long as all necessary data is captured and recorded.



## 5 SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The VBP+ program requirements almost all stem back to the idea of social responsibility; that is, the idea that producers have a necessary role in maintaining standards on their operation that uphold consumer confidence in Canadian beef and industry standards. This encompasses topics as varied as environmental stewardship, animal health, nutrition, and animal welfare. However, in this manual, the term social responsibility largely applies to upholding standards for conduct on farm.

VBP+ producers are socially responsible in that they ensure a respectful and safe workplace for themselves and their employees (those working on the operations), with a focus on continual training and mentoring rather than prescriptive rules and restrictions dictated by VBP+. This translates into effective management in other key components of the program, leading to the production of nutritious, safe, and trusted beef for Canadians.