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SECTION 09 ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

VBP+ PRODUCER REFERENCE MANUAL

BINING STEWARDSHIP

WATER MANAGEMENT MANURE MANAGEMENT DEADSTOCK MANAGEMENT WILDLIFE REDUCE / REUSE / RECYCLE CHEMICAL USE, STORAGE & DISPOSAL LAND & PASTURE MANAGEMENT AIR QUALITY

Cattle producers employ management practices that protect and improve land, water and air resources while optimizing agriculture production.

An environment encompassing healthy soil, vegetation, and water enables sustainable production of livestock and crops to feed our growing population. The Canadian beef industry supports efforts of individual producers to protect and improve their land resources; optimizing agriculture production while encouraging biodiversity. Partnerships between conservation organizations and producers, such as dialogue and research, have benefitted the industry.

Environmental stewardship includes:

- Acknowledgment that land and water resources used for agricultural production are also integral to other ecological systems and have value beyond agriculture
 - Acceptance and appreciation of wildlife, wildlife habitat and biodiversity
 - Action to preserve and improve air quality by reducing odours, dust, pollution and greenhouse gases with agriculture production.

Creation of an Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) is encouraged, to identify environmental risks found naturally on the operation, as well as risks related to current farm/ranch management practices. EFP resources can be found through your provincial agricultural ministry and various local associations. Producers are encouraged to collaborate with government, industry, and conservation organizations to continually improve environmental stewardship.



WATER MANAGEMENT





Water quality, whether above or below the surface, is very important to the productivity of the operation and on users further downstream. It is important to maintain and improve if necessary, the quality and accessability of water for livestock use. Management practices that maintain or improve water quality should be identified and implemented whenever possible for the benefit of the operation and other users, including natural ecosystems.

Producers should be aware of the unique water management challenges of their operation such as run off, standing water, and flowing or seasonal water ways. They should also be knowledgeable of the requirements and regulations of water sources management from regional or local watershed agencies; including federal, provincial or municipal governments. Additional requirements or water management for intensive livestock operations such as permits for water-use and waste management, and license for wells establishing baselines for water-use volume and quality may be necessary according to location.

O1 WATER QUALITY

Water quality should be protected from all forms of contamination, including deadstock, chemical, manure nutrient runoff, and sediment. Common practices that producers can adopt to protect water quality include:

- Rotating feeding and wintering areas to naturally spread manure over a larger area
- Maintaining buffer zones around water sources to divert nutrient runoff
- Fencing off well heads to protect aquifers from manure and other contamination
- Properly retiring abandoned water wells, with input from a water well professional





A riparian area is the space between land and a river or stream. These areas play a key role in soil conservation and habitat biodiversity. A healthy, intact riparian area can act as a filter, removing or absorbing impurities before they enter the water system.

Care should be taken in riparian areas to prevent damage to the soil banks, prevent disturbance of sediments, or alteration of water flow. Control or limit access to riparian areas, wetlands, and shorelines by:

- Fencing them off
- Providing off-site stock water stations or tanks
- Planting buffer strips or other vegetative ground cover (preventing erosion)
- Creating berms around sensitive areas
- Constructing gravel ramp crossings over streams (preventing sediment)





03 IRRIGATION & DRAINAGE

In some areas, irrigation or drainage is practiced to optimize forage and/or pasture production. Utilize local experts to develop irrigation or drainage options appropriate for your climate, soil type, and management system.

Irrigation and drainage systems should be designed to be as efficient as possible. Irrigation systems should minimize water loss in transport to plants. Drainage methods vary in design from simple ditches to subsurface, tile drainage systems.

Care must be taken to manage water movement, as surface water can leach nutrients and/or chemicals into groundwater. Consider lining ditches with material (i.e. compacted clay or impervious artificial liners) to minimize percolation of water into the water table.





In confined feeding areas, it is important that slope of pen floors and catch basins are designed with water/ manure runoff in mind which may include using synthetic or natural liners in the catch basins. Operations should have a valid Confined Feeding Operation Permit (if required) and follow all municipal, provincial and federal rules.

Livestock waste management requires a balanced approach to spread waste manure on land at rates that enhance and improve soil condition and productivity. Practices that minimize the risk of water contamination (surface and subsurface) and improve water quality and supply should be employed.

In addition to the recommended water quality and riparian management practices listed above, feedlots should consider the following steps to preserve, conserve, and improve water sources:

- Complete water testing at regular intervals to establish a water quality baseline
- Establish buffer zones around water bodies (no manure or deadstock disposal)
- Manage or contain run off from feed storage areas
- Manage water sources to allow habitat biodiversity
- Properly maintain irrigation and drainage systems

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Lack of understanding or awareness of the responsibility to protect, preserve and manage water resources.

Aware of the responsibility to manage water resources, and have a basic plan in place.

Comprehensive verbal water management plan in place with knowledge about protecting water resources and developed with input from professionals.

Comprehensive written water management plan in place, with records that show implementation of proactive practices protecting water sources implemented and developed with input from professionals. A current Environmental Farm Plan (or equivalent) is in place for the operation.

MANURE MANAGEMENT





REMOVAL AND STORAGE



DECOMPOSITION & COMPOSTING



SPREADING & APPLICATION

Livestock manure is managed to prevent environmental damage, water contamination, and reduce food safety and biosecurity risks.

When managed correctly, manure is an excellent organic fertilizer and valuable soil amendment, providing nutrients to growing crops and increasing soil water-holding capacity. If not managed properly, the accumulation of livestock manure can create environmental problems, adversely impact cattle health, and create food safety issues

Manure management practices and plans are recommended to document agronomic practices and protect operations from nuisance complaints by environmental groups and unhappy neighbours.

O REMOVAL & STORAGE



Animal health is improved by removing manure, which harbours pathogens and parasites. Clean pens and bedding also improve food safety by reducing the buildup of tag (the matting of cattle hair with manure) which can spread harmful bacteria, such as E. coli, during processing.

Any areas where cattle are confined for calving or feeding should be cleaned regularly: at least once per year, or more if conditions warrant (i.e. sick pens or transport trucks). Areas commonly requiring manure removal include:

- Pens, corrals, and barns
- Areas near waterers and feed bunks
- Transport trucks and trailers

Manure should be stored in areas where cattle do not have access and runoff can be contained. Cement pads, catch basins, and holding ponds are commonly used on intensive livestock operations. "High-risk" manure from sick pens or transport trucks hauling "outside" cattle should be strategically placed to mitigate potential of disease transfer.

In some jurisdictions, strict guidelines regulate manure storage and application. Producers are encouraged to consult with local experts, who can help develop effective manure storage systems that follow local regulations.

02 DECOMPOSITION & COMPOSITING



and weed seeds. High-risk manure, such as that from sick pens and transport trucks, should not be spread until fully decomposed or composted.

Composting manure is more cost effective than spreading raw manure, is easier on equipment, and is more accurate to apply. The composting process produces methane and nitrous oxide, both greenhouse gases, and can add additional costs in the form of additional facilities and management. Producers are encouraged to evaluate composting practices to determine feasibility and follow all local rules.

03 SPREADING & APPLICATION



When spreading manure, apply the right nutrient source at the right rate, at the right time, in the right place.

RIGHT NUTRIENT SOURCE

Test manure for nutrient content and density

- o Manure from cattle fed forage-based rations has higher nitrogen and lower phosphorus levels
- o Manure from cattle fed grain-based rations has higher phosphorus and lower nitrogen levels

RIGHT RATE

- Regularly test soil nutrient levels
- Match manure applications with the nutritional needs of the specific crop

RIGHT TIME

- Spread manure early in the growing season for maximum drying and sunlight
- Avoid spreading manure on snow or frozen ground where spring melting may carry runoff elsewhere
- Follow all local regulations

RIGHT PLACE

- Prevent manure runoff into water bodies and seasonal water courses
- Apply manure only to areas requiring nutrients
- Spread manure on cropland where it can be incorporated into the soil
- If raw manure is applied to pasture land, wait a full growing season to graze (to minimize spread of pathogens and parasites)

Manure management on pasture and rangeland shouldn't be overlooked. Cattle continually kept on the same pasture can cause manure build-up and harmful run-off, especially in winter feeding areas. To manage manure build-up on pasture, encourage the movement of animals by:

- Rotating wintering areas
- Utilizing temporary fencing or windbreaks
- Moving bedding and feeding grounds
- Bale and swath grazing

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DEADSTOCK MANAGEMENT

Deadstock is safely disposed of with consideration for the environment and biosecurity, while adhering to local regulations.

All cattle operations must have a means of dealing with the storage and disposal of deadstock, which includes fetal/placenta tissues from abortions.

When dealing with a dead animal, be aware of the cause of death, because deadstock may harbour pathogens or chemicals that present danger to scavengers, soil, and water health. Examples include:

Chemical euthanasia by a veterinarian – results in the carcass being contaminated with the drugs used.

Anthrax – spores may stay present in soil for many years, long after the remains of an infected animal have disappeared.

Suspicious wildlife deaths can also be a concern and a veterinarian or conservation officer should be contacted to report unusual occurences.

All deadstock should be stored and disposed of in a manner that prevents the spread of disease (or other contaminants) and avoids leaching into waterbodies. Odour control may also be an issue. Producers should be familiar with and follow all municipal, provincial and federal rules for storage and disposal of deadstock. Acceptable disposal methods may include:

- 🗸 Burial
- Incineration
- Composting
- Controlled scavenging
- Deadstock pick-up and carcass rendering

Consider developing a Deadstock Management Plan to provide step-by-step directions on what to do when a death occurs, assess the appropriate method of disposal, and ensure local regulations are adhered to.

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Lack of awareness or understanding of the risk deadstock may have on the environment and animal health.

Basic understanding of the risk of deadstock and a basic plan in place to address potential risks to soil, water and wildlife.

Comprehensive verbal deadstock management plan in place detailing how environmental and biosecurity risks are addressed while incorporating all local regulations.

Comprehensive written deadstock management plan in place detailing how environmental and biosecurity risks are addressed while incorporating all local regulations and having records showing implementation.



Calf Post-Mortem

WILDLIFE



WILDLIFE HABITAT WILDLIFE CONFLICT

Wildlife habitat is protected and improved.

The Canadian beef industry provides many positive contributions to the environment, such as maintaining grasslands, sequestering carbon, and increasing biodiversity and wildlife habitat.

74% of Canada's native grasslands have been lost due to cultivation or development. Grazing cattle plays an essential role in preserving grasslands and improving grassland health and function (CRSB, 2016).

The disappearance of native grasslands has led to an overall loss of nearly half the populations of grassland species since the 1970s, with some species declining by as much as 87% (Downes, 2011). When grasslands are lost to cultivation, species that depend on that grassland for survival suffer. Canadian grasslands, preserved through the efforts of ranchers, can store up to 200 tonnes of carbon per hectare. Cultivation of rangeland can lead to 30-50% loss of soil organic carbon (Bork, 2013). Lands where beef cattle are raised provide the majority of wildlife habitat on all food producing lands in Canada (almost 70%) (CRSB, 2016). This includes over 60 species at risk that depend on grasslands.

Nearly one third of Canada's agricultural land is covered in grasses and forages (20 million hectares). These lands are typically unsuitable for crop farming but support grazing cattle while maintaining wildlife habitat and storing approximately 1.5 billion tonnes of carbon (CRSB, 2016). There are many examples of initiatives focused on working with the agricultural community to facilitate recovery of species at risk on agricultural lands through voluntary stewardship actions related to critical habitat for species at risk.

O] WILDLIFE HABITAT

Taking care of the land is nothing new to most cattle producers: a healthy landscape typically means productive cattle. Producers are expected to maintain and improve habitat for the benefit of all species, including other mammals, birds, insects, and microorganisms needed to keep the natural ecosystem in balance.

Producers should be able to explain and provide evidence of on-farm conservation practices, such as:

- Implementation of grazing plans for the protection of grasslands and riparian areas
- Planting shelterbelts
- Delayed haying and/or grazing during species at risk nesting periods
- Installing nesting boxes
- Fencing off feed storage areas from wildlife
- Prudent use of poisons, herbicides, pesticides, seed treatments

Familiarity with all species of wildlife present on your operation or in the area is also important. A Wildlife Inventory identifies species common to the area (including at-risk species, predators, or pests) and helps detect changes in resident wildlife population.



02 WILDLIFE CONFLICT





On occasion, cattle production and wildlife will conflict. It may be a predator problem or wildlife nuisance; causing damage to crops and feed, transmitting disease, or competing for scarce feed and water resources. In these circumstances, producers must intervene.

In some cases, producers can insure against this risk or receive compensation for losses. Producers are encouraged to record losses due to predation and damage to stored feed; and work with local authorities to develop solutions.

If permission is granted for hunting on farm land, producers must inform hunters of operation specific rules to ensure the safety of; people, livestock, and environmentally sensitive areas. Hunters should be informed of cattle locations to prevent accidental shooting and livestock death or damage. Buckshot (birdshot) can penetrate muscle tissue and cause a serious food safety risk.

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Lack of awareness or understanding of the value, significance and responsibility of maintaining wildlife habitat.

Aware of wildlife species on the operation and practices are in place to maintain a wildlife presence, while addressing pests and predators.

An inventory of wildlife, including species at risk and problem species is on record and population monitoring system is developed and implemented.

Habitat improvements and conservation efforts are implemented and recorded; wildlife conflict mitigation efforts implemented.

REDUCE/REUSE/ RECYCLE





It makes economic sense to implement management practices and technology that will increase efficiency and reduce costs.

An Environmental Farm Plan should include information about how non-organic waste is dealt with by the operation and describe practices in place to reduce, reuse or recycle. Also, it can include information on how waste reduction efforts, recycling and disposal of non-recyclables, such as batteries, plastics, chemicals, oil, wire, etc. are performed and documented.

REDUCE

Cattle operations are encouraged to reduce the amount of inputs required to produce desired output. Examples include:

- Using fuel efficient equipment
- Swath grazing to reduce the use of equipment and fuel
- Minimum/no-till cropping
- LED lighting
- Motion-detector lighting
- Energy efficient water bowls
- Increased R-value building insulation
- Proper tire inflation
- GPS feeding/farming systems
- Generating solar or wind energy
- Improved cattle genetics
- Prudent use of animal health products that promote efficient growth

REUSE



Many materials can be salvaged and reused or repurposed for other functions; reducing costs and environmental impact. Examples include:

- Old barrels and tires used to hold down plastic silage tarp, or for dispensing feed, salt, mineral, or water
- Waste wood and metals used to build new structures



RECYCLE



If materials cannot be reused or re-purposed, producers are encouraged to recycle them. New facilities are coming online to recycle agriculture plastics such as silage pit covers, plastic twine, and grain bags; providing a better alternative to burying or burning these products (burning is not allowed in most jurisdictions).

Although recycling facilities may be far away from farming operations, neighbours can cooperate by taking turns delivering recyclables. Recycling toxic materials such as oil, batteries, anti-freeze, and chemical containers also eliminates the risk of accidental ingestion by cattle.

Organic material produced on cattle operations, such as used bedding and manure, can also have value when recycled. Composting is a value-added activity that can increase the fertilizer value from manure and deadstock. Biodigesters are another alternative that can convert organic waste to energy resources. Human safety should be considered when contemplating biodigesters and all provincial and municipal regulations followed.

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No awareness, understanding or effort made to implement practices that reduce/ reuse/recycle inputs to improve resource efficiency and lessen environmental impact.

Awareness of various types of agricultural waste and how to reduce it; aware of energy inputs; verbal animal production

Active practice of the 3R's (reduce, reuse, recycle); verbal animal production goals in place; implementation of production practices that increase efficiency and

Active practice of the 3R's (reduce, reuse, recycle); monitor and document cattle performance against specific goals;

CHEMICAL USE STORAGE & DISPOSAL

On-farm chemicals are applied, stored and disposed of safely to prevent harm to people, livestock, and the environment.

Beef operations are expected to store, use, and dispose of herbicides, pesticides, treated seed, fungicides, fertilizers, fuels, lubricants, and solvents in a way that doesn't contaminate water, soil, livestock, or wildlife.

Some of these chemicals can have harmful effects on people and animals, via direct exposure or thorough feed and water contamination. Use agricultural chemicals according to manufacturer's directions and be prepared for unplanned circumstances or accidents, such as:

- Application of crop protection products on windy days (potential for sprayer drift)
- Application of crop protection products prior to a downpour (potential for runoff)
- Cattle getting loose and accessing chemicals or recently sprayed crops (incident must be recorded to ensure withdrawal times are calculated and adhered to)

On-farm use, storage, and disposal of agricultural chemicals must follow municipal and provincial regulations. Storage areas must be inaccessible to livestock and wildlife and designed to eliminate the potential of cross contamination to feed and water sources. In the event of accidental environmental contamination, cleanup should be done immediately and, if necessary, local authorities notified to address risks to neighbours, wildlife, and water systems.

Other steps to minimize risks posed by on-farm use and storage of chemicals include:

- Apply nutrients according to crop needs and soil testing results
- Only trained (licenced) personnel apply crop protection products
- Dispose of empty containers at approved sites
- Store fuel in approved double-walled tanks on cement pads with berms to prevent leaks
- Have an Emergency Spill Plan in place and cleanup materials readily available



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No awareness, understanding or effort made to implement practices that reduce/reuse/recycle inputs to improve resource efficiency and lessen environmental impact.

Awareness of various types of agricultural waste and how to reduce it; aware of energy inputs; verbal animal production goals in place.

Active practice of the 3R's (reduce, reuse, recycle); verbal animal production goals in place; implementation of production practices that increase efficiency and improve productivity.

Active practice of the 3R's (reduce, reuse, recycle); monitor and document cattle performance against specific goals; documented waste reduction and energy efficiency efforts.

LAND & PASTURE MANAGEMENT

Land management practices benefit the cattle operation and the natural environment.

The act of grazing promotes plant growth and species diversity, and today cattle fill the role of primary grazer on Canadian grasslands both tame and native. Grazing cattle provide a natural benefit to land in agriculture production by dispersing manure to recycle nutrients back into the soil. Grasslands provide habitat for over 1,000 plant, animal, and insect species; and sequester carbon.

Land management practices should meet the nutritional needs of cattle, allow for plant re-growth, protect soil composition, and provide plentiful habitat for wildlife. Examples include:

- Cross-fencing and rotational grazing
- Creation of permanent pastures
- Rotational cropping
- No-till or minimum till seeding
- Use of cover crops
- Regular soil testing to determine appropriate fertilizer/manure application rates
- Control of invasive weeds
- Prudent use of herbicides, pesticides, fungicides, inoculants, pest control, etc.
- Use of GPS and overhead photographs to monitor ecosystems
- Adjustment of stocking rates based on grazing conditions (drought, flood, etc.)

Each cattle operation is unique; differing climate, soil type, and topography result in varying management practices. Producers are encouraged to assess their current land use procedures, identifying areas of success and those requiring improvement. Describe steps to improve land productivity and preserve biodiversity in plans for:

- Grazing management
- Soil management
- Nutrient management
- 🗸 🛛 Riparian area management
- Herbicide/pesticide use



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 Lack of understanding or awareness of the damage to land and pasture if management practices neglect indicators of forage production and availability, water quality and soil condition.

Basic understanding of land and pasture value by implementing practices that monitor grasslands, pastures and native ecosystems; identify and manage invasive plant species; monitor soil conditions such as erosion, compaction and degredation.

Grazing Operation - Implementation of a verbal grazing and/or soil management plan that minimizes negative impacts from cattle on natural ecosystems.

Intensive Livestock Operation - Implementation of a verbal soil or nutrient management plan that minimizes the negative impacts of manure on natural ecosystems.

Grazing Operation - Implementation of a written and documented grazing and/or soil management plan that is reviewed regularly and has specific objectives identifying soil health, stocking rates and water quality.

Intensive Livestock Operation - Implementation of a written and documented soil or nutrient management plan that is regularly reviewed and has specific objectives for soil and water testing, variable nutrient application rates based on test results and crop requirements

AIR QUALITY

Air Quality is important for the health of cattle, people and the environment. Producers should consider practices that reduce greenhouse gases and nuisance characteristics such as dust and odours.

Agriculture production can be a source of greenhouse gases. The industry has initiated research to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cattle, and producers have adopted techniques to reduce greenhouse gas output. Practices that can reduce greenhouse gas emissions on-farm are; incorporation of feed additives to rations to increase feed efficiency, select breeding stock with genetic potential to increase feed and growth efficiencies, utilize renewable energy resources when possible (solar, wind) and use products and equipment that are energy efficient.

Producers should be aware of odour and dust issues from their livestock operations and follow all local legislation. Proactive action should be taken to manage dust and odour issues before they become problematic, especially on operations close to residential communities. Be a good neighbor: avoid activities that cause dust or odour at night or on long weekends.

Most beef operations have minimal indoor facilities, but those that do should monitor indoor air quality and ensure ventilation systems are in good working order.

Examples of on-farm air quality improvement measures include:

- Frequent cleaning of barns to control indoor ammonia levels
- Frequent cleaning of pens to minimize odour
- Prompt incorporation or direct injection of manure to minimize odour
- Prompt removal of deadstock to prevent odour
- Monitoring composting activities for odour and air quality issues
- Equipping pens with sprinklers to reduce dust
- Using water trucks on gravel roads to control dust



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Lack of awareness or understanding of air quality issues that may arise from cattle production.

Aware of air quality issues such as odours and dust and implement practices to improve air quality. (i.e. barn ventilation and odour reduction)

Aware of air quality issues such as odours and dust and implement practices to improve air quality. Measurable quality indicators such as odour and dust are monitored and recorded.

Air quality improvement practices implemented, documented and records are regularly reviewed.



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TOXIN EXPOSURE RECORD

INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP

YEAR: 2021

DATE: June 29, 2	GROUP OR PEN :	North pasture-NE 12-21-17	OTHER:
TYPE OF EXPOSURE	Exposure to Pesticide canola crop	Sprayed	

PRODUCT NAME: Flea Beetle eliminator

DOSE/ROUTE: Cattle grazed canola overnight. Field had been sprayed day before

0 P T I O N A L					
ANIMAL ID	ANIMAL ID	ANIMAL ID	ANIMAL ID		
120 Cows With calves					
3 herd bulls					

John Doe (producer) contacted Dr. Veterinarian who then called CgFARAD -VETERINARIAN CONTACT: (Canadian Global Food Animal Residue Avoidance Database)

Re.	moved cattle from crop. Returned to pasture. Monitor for affects to the
Cer	stral nervous system. Some animals may not be able to travel for water/feed.
ACTIONS / So	me may experience shortage of breath or inability to breathe. Handle with
TREATMENTS TAKEN ext	freme care. No treatment is available. First 24 to 48 hours is critical. Must be
pre	pared to euthanize as necessary.

VETERINARIAN CALCULATED WITHDRAWAL DATE: CgFARAD recommends 120 days meat withdrawal Withdrawal Date: Oct 20, 2021

COMMENTS: Herd broke through the fences and entered the field. Spraying was just Completed when cattle broke in unnoticed until next day

EXAMPLES:

EXPOSURE MODE: Ingested, Inhalation, Spray, Wet-skin Contact EXPOSURE TYPE: Herbicide, Pesticide, Petro-chemical, Anti-freeze



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RECORD OF HERBICIDE OR PESTICIDE USE ON PASTURE OR HARVESTED FEED

YEAR: 2021

DATE(S)	FIELD IDENTIFICATION OR LOCATION	PRODUCT USED	RATE	ACREAGE	"SAFE TO HARVEST/ GRAZE" TIME PERIOD	WITHDRAWAL PERIOD / COMMENTS
June 1, 2021	South Field	Brand Name (1.5L/acre)	45(30 acres	30 days	Cows won't be put on until next year (2022) Producer Initials: J.S.

Record required for lands owned or under control of the beef cattle operation for the current year. If no herbicide or pesticide used, indicate N/A for the current year.



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ANIMAL (CATTLE) MOVEMENT RECORD

DATE	INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP ID	NUMBER OF HEAD	REASON FOR MOVEMENT	PREMISE ID	COMMENTS
June 21, 2021	Breeding Heifers	30	Turned out on Pasture	A00745	Branded N-J
June 30, 2021	VBP 252G VBP 251G	2	Turned in bulls with heifers	A00745	Not branded
July 1, 2021	VBP 251G	1	Took bull to vet for injury due to fighting		Brought home later that day
July 29, 2021	VBP 464H VBP 465H VBP 466H	3	Took 3 open heifers to Bonanza		Took to Camrose, Alberta for Bonanza and brought back on July 31, 2021

This record template can be used to record all movements of cattle into, out-of, and between production areas (pastures, pens, cattle shows, vet clinics)