

Beef Cow Management Survey USDA NAHMS 2007-2008
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In 2007-08, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) conducted a study of U.S. beef cow-calf operations. The Beef 2007-08 study focused on health and management practices on U.S. beef operations from 24 of the Nation's major beef producing States. These States represented 79.6 percent of U.S. cow-calf operations and 87.8 percent of U.S. beef cows. "Beef 2007-08 Part 1: Reference of Beef Cow calf Management Practices in the United States, 2007-08" contains information collected from 2,872 U.S. cow-calf operations. The following are a few highlights excerpted from Part I of the Beef 2007-08 studies.

- A higher percentage of operations with 200 or more beef cows utilized specific production practices to target a breed-influenced program as a marketing channel for calves produced compared with operations having fewer beef cows.
- The majority of operations (83.3 percent) kept some form of records, and over 90 percent of operations with 100 or more cows kept records.
- More operations considered veterinarians a very important source for both general information and breeding and genetics information (53.1 and 45.2 percent, respectively) than any other information source.
- Nearly two-thirds of operations (66.1 percent) used some form of individual animal identification (ID) on at least some cows, and 79.1 percent of cows had some form of individual ID, see table 1.
- On operations with 200 or more beef cows, nearly 9 of 10 cows (88.8 percent) had individual ID of any type, compared with about 6 of 10 cows (60.5 percent) on operations with 1 to 49 beef cows.
- The majority of operations (53.8 percent) used calf age and/or weight to determine when to wean calves. Tradition was the next most common reason used to determine when to wean calves (11.9 percent of operations). The percentage of operations that usually provided information regarding their calf health programs to buyers increased as herd size increased.
- Of operations that usually reported information to buyers regarding their calf health programs, the percentage that usually provided written documentation ranged from 32.6 percent of operations with 1 to 49 beef cows to 53.1 percent of operations with 200 or more, see figure 1.
- Overall, more than one-half of operation (51.3 percent) had heard of the Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) program, a higher percentage of operations with 200 or more beef cows had heard of the BQA program compared with operations with fewer than 200 beef cows.
- The majority of operations that attended BQA training was either using BQA practices or switched to them after training.

Table 1. Individual animal identification survey results (USDA NAHMS 2007-2008)
 Beef cow management practices

Percent of Operations by type of Individual Animal ID Used on at Least some cows and Percentage of Cows by Type of Individual Animal ID Used		
Individual ID type	% Operations	% Cows
Hot-iron brand	12.2	20.5
Freeze Brand	2.4	3.9
Ear Notch	4.8	9.8
Electronic ID or Microchip Responder	0.8	1.2
Brucellosis vac. ear tag	24.2	38.1
Other metal ear tag	1.6	2.1
Plastic ear tag	50.4	57.5
Ear tattoo	8.1	7.7
Other method	0.7	0.9
Any ID	66.1	79.1

Figure 1. Beef Cow operations providing animal health information at time of sale.

