

Nebraska

FARMER

The Magazine of Nebraska Agriculture

Quality promise

By DON McCABE

GROWING up in balmy West Palm Beach, Fla., and graduating from Dartmouth College, an Ivy League school in Hanover, N.H., isn't your typical path to a career in the cattle feeding business. But that's where Anne Burkholder is today as part-owner and manager of the 3,000-head-capacity feedyard Will Feed Inc., near Cozad.

The beef industry in Nebraska and nationally, as well as the U.S. consumer, is better off because she took that roundabout journey.

"I always thought Florida had too many people, and I wanted to go somewhere less crowded," says the mother of three.

It was at Dartmouth that she met Matt Burkholder. They married and moved to his hometown of Cozad where he operates an alfalfa dehydration business, and Anne got into cattle feeding.

In 11 years, she's gone from "knowing little about animal agriculture" to being a driving force for the Nebraska Cattlemen's Beef Quality Assurance program. Her passion for livestock handling and safety issues and improving the quality of beef now extends to the national level.

She is chairwoman of NC's technical advisory committee, which oversees the state's BQA program. Under BQA, which began more than 25 years ago with a focus on injection-site problems, producers become certified in cattle handling and treatment guidelines with the

At a glance

- Cozad cattle feeder was born and raised in sunny Florida.
- She is now one of the state's leading BQA representatives.
- She stresses the need to produce consistent quality.

ultimate goal of maximizing consumer confidence in beef. Nebraska, a national leader in BQA, has some 6,500 certified producers.

"I come at this issue from a different perspective, from the angle of a consumer raised in a large urban area," Anne says. "The food-safety issue is critical for the consumer and will become even more so in the future. The beef industry must beat animal-rights groups, such as the Humane Society of the United States, to the punch. It must be a producer-run effort rather than government-run."

In her own BQA-certified feedyard, Anne stresses constant communication with her employees. They must know the feedyard's animal treatment protocol and recordkeeping book, developed with the help of a local vet, and follow a BQA manual that sets out guidelines on cattle handling.

Drew Gaffney of Anselmo is a rancher and Nebraska Cattlemen's BQA coordinator. He helped conduct the state's first two BQA calf sales in recent months at the North Platte Livestock Market: an October calf sale and the second sale in January, a weaned and backgrounded calf sale, with all animals from BQA-certified operations.

"Anne is an articulate



ASSURING CONSUMERS: Anne Burkholder says that beef quality will be increasingly important to the American consumer.

spokesperson for the industry and BQA," Gaffney says. "Our program would not be as successful without her time, effort and enthusiasm."

Matt and Anne have three children: Ashley Grace, 8;

Megan, 5½; and Karyn, 3.

■ Read how Anne Burkholder and other Nebraskans are expanding Beef Quality Assurance programs in Nebraska and nationally on Page 4.



A closer look at Nebraska's spud industry
Page 25



Researchers study new sorghum trait
Page 28



Beetles take bite out of leafy spurge
Page 60

"NEED MORE POWER?"

Check out the new MT900B at www.challengerag.com/

Challenger



CH900001