



*Community of Agriculturalists who Respect the Earth*



**2024**

**CARE Certified**

COW/CALF & STOCKER/BACKGROUND STANDARD FOR THE BEEF INDUSTRY

---

# INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

---

For the purpose of this Standard, the following segments of the beef industry are defined:

- Cow / Calf – Ranch or farm operation that has permanent herd of cows which produces calves annually for later sale.
- Stocker / Backgrounder – Operations used to put weight on calves prior to entry into a feedyard. Calves may graze on grasses or forages, or may be fed a ration in a dry lot / pen.

The CARE Certified program has three components, each having their own set of standard criteria:

1. **Animal Care:** The purpose of the Animal Care Standard is to reinforce animal care measures are being taken in the following stages of cattle production: Cow/Calf and Stocker / Backgrounder. Embracing the science involved to ensure animals are raised with care, we incorporated the following concepts in the development of the Standard:
  - Five Domains Model (nutrition, environment, health, behavioral interactions, and experiences);
  - Five Freedoms framework (freedom from hunger and thirst, freedom from discomfort, freedom from pain injury or disease, freedom to express normal behavior, and freedom from fear and distress); and
  - Three Circles Model (basic health and functioning, nature, and affective states).
2. **Environmental Stewardship:** The purpose of the Environmental Stewardship Standard is to support the maintenance of a sustainable environment for future generations by promoting practices that encourage waste reduction, management of natural and renewable resources, reducing our carbon footprint, while optimizing animal productivity. Good environmental management practices help ensure the longevity and success of the beef industry.
3. **People & Community:** The purpose of the People & Community Standard is to reinforce efforts being made at the farm or ranch to ensure workers – whether directly or indirectly employed by the operation – are appropriately trained, provided with a safe working environment and fairly compensated and treated. It is also to encourage the growth and development opportunities for all human resources (including family), and encouraging legacy and succession planning.

Locations certified under the CARE Certified program maintain a quality manual describing how the operation meets the program criteria. The CARE Certified Standard is modified as necessary to continually integrate improved animal husbandry practices, environmental stewardship techniques and improved practices affecting people involved with the operation and the community. At a minimum, a formal review of the program standards and audit checklist are completed by a third party each year. Recommendations for updates are brought forward to an external advisory committee for consideration / approval. Any necessary changes are made on an annual basis.

## ANIMAL CARE STANDARD COW/CALF & STOCKER/BACKGROUNDERS OPERATIONS

Criterion Number	Criterion	Cow/Calf	Stocker / Backgrounder
<b>AC1. Animal Husbandry Training Program</b>			
AC1a.	The operation has an Animal Husbandry Training Program that describes frequency and method of training.	X	X
AC1b.	All employees (full-time and part-time), contractors and all other personnel involved with feeding, handling or caring for cattle must hold current BQA training certificate (every 3 years).	X	X
AC1c.	The operation trains all caregivers annually in animal care principles and procedures. Training is documented to include date(s), trainer(s), trainee(s) and topic(s) covered.	X	X
AC1d.	The operation identifies a person responsible to oversee animal care practices.	X	X
<b>AC2. Biosecurity &amp; Secure Beef Supply</b>			
AC2a.	The operation has a documented Security Plan that addresses controls and procedures in the case of a foreign animal disease outbreak. The Security Plan addresses the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for stopping movement of livestock;</li> <li>• Plan for segregation of healthy livestock from affected livestock;</li> <li>• Plan for notification to appropriate agencies regarding any suspected disease; and</li> <li>• Plan for depopulation and disposal.</li> </ul>	X	X
AC2b.	The Security Plan is reviewed annually by management.	X	X
AC2c.	All employees are trained on the operation's Security Plan annually.	X	X
AC2d.	The operation maintains identification of cattle and associated records in order to trace cattle to immediate source into the operation and immediate shipment from the operation. This can be done by group or individual animal.	X	X
<b>AC3. General Care &amp; Management</b>			
AC3a.	The operation has a documented Animal Care Policy addressing expectation of stock personnel and states that willful abuse, neglect or cruelty must be reported and will not be tolerated.	X	X
AC3b.	The operation can demonstrate that cattle under their care are routinely observed and monitored for general health, access to feed and water.	X	X
AC3c.	Genetic selection is performed to ensure good outcomes for cattle, given the operation's geographic location and natural resources.	X	
AC3d.	Culling of animals is performed to ensure welfare for the animal. Animals in poor condition are not maintained.	X	

<b>AC4. Herd Health</b>			
AC4a.	<p>Herd health plan that addresses the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All types of cattle (cow, bull, calf, replacements, etc.) at the operation.</li> <li>Prevention of disease through vaccinations and parasite control and use of other technologies to promote health and productivity.</li> <li>Processing practices performed at the premises such as castration, dehorning, tagging and branding of calves; pregnancy checking, artificial insemination, estrous synchronization of cows; semen testing of bulls.</li> <li>Use of technologies for genetic selection and breeding practices. This can include synchronization strategies, bull selection criteria, artificial insemination, embryo transfer, etc.</li> <li>Breeding and culling decisions.</li> <li>Nutritional needs being met for each stage of production.</li> </ul>	X	X
AC4b.	All animal health products are administered according to label instruction, following FDA and/or veterinary prescription.	X	X
AC4c.	Stockpersons follow BQA best practices for all animal health products to include recommended injection sites, as well as weight and age recommendations for castration and dehorning.	X	X
AC4d.	Orphaned calves are provided colostrum as soon as possible and within 24 hours of birth.	X	
AC4e.	Weaning practices are implemented to reduce stress for cow and calf.	X	
<b>AC5. Feed and Water</b>			
AC5a.	Cattle have access to feed supply as addressed in National Research Council's nutrient requirements for beef cattle and applicable stage of production.	X	X
AC5b.	Cattle have free access to water.	X	X
AC5c.	Feed/forage and water quality is monitored at least annually.	X	X
<b>AC6. Cattle Handling</b>			
AC6a.	<b>No willful acts of abuse or neglect are observed during the audit. If a willful act of abuse or neglect is observed, the site will not be certified.</b>	X	X
AC6b.	Cattle are handled using low stress handling techniques.	X	X
AC6c.	Methods used for herding (horseback, ATV, helicopter, on foot, etc.) do not cause harm to the cattle or handlers.	X	X
AC6d.	The operation uses only approved handling aids to drive or process cattle, minimizing electric prod use. The electric prod is used on less than 10% of the animals processed. Examples of approved driving aids include paddles, sorting sticks, flags, etc.	X	X
AC6e.	The operation utilizes BQA best practices when performing painful procedures to cattle (e.g., castration and dehorning when calves are less than 3 months (90 days) of age), and not to exceed 6 months of age.	X	X
AC6f.	The operation has procedures in place to address calving complications with cows or heifers.	X	

AC6g.	Chutes should be operated in a manner that minimizes stress for cattle. When cattle are handled using chutes, safety considerations such as observing falls, stumbles, head catch, side restraint and vocalization are considered.	X	X
AC6h.	<b>Face branding of any kind (hot or freeze) is not allowed.</b>	X	X
AC6i.	<b>Wattling and brisket tags are not allowed.</b>	X	X
<b>AC7. Animal Observations/ Outcome Measurements</b>			
AC7a.	Body Condition Score of cattle is routinely observed. No more than 5% of the herd observed has a low body condition score (analogous to BCS <2 in the 9-point beef BCS system). Temporary exceptions (i.e., BCS of 2) may be granted if there has been prolonged, severe drought and producer has evidence of emergency feeding program.	X	X
AC7b.	The operation assesses cattle lameness and hoof health routinely. When observed, 95% of the cattle have no indication of lameness or a treatment program is implemented. Cattle with a limp or hoof conditions (foot rot, foundered, etc.) are identified and under care for improvement.	X	X
AC7c.	Cattle observed with abnormalities (i.e., open wounds, abscesses, eye conditions, hoof conditions, etc.) are less than 10% of the herd and under treatment for the respective abnormality, where applicable.	X	X
AC7d.	<b>When observed, 95% of the cow herd is identified. This can be a group/lot or individual identification method. Examples include: visual ear tag, electronic ear tag, ear clip (bangs vaccination), brand, etc.</b>	X	
AC7e.	<b>Calves are tagged with RFID prior to leaving the ranch of origin. Stocker / Backgrounder locations shall read and verify incoming calves with qualifying RFID.</b>	X	X
<b>AC8. Responsible Antibiotic Use</b>			
AC8a.	Judicious/responsible use of antibiotics is followed, including those administered via injection, feed (VFD) or water (prescription).	X	X
AC8b.	The operation has evidence of Vet Client Patient Relationship (VCPR).	X	X
AC8c.	The operation treats the fewest number of animals possible to minimize spread of disease and promote judicious use of antibiotics. Mass treating groups of cattle is limited and only performed when necessary.	X	X
AC8d.	<b>Operation adheres to FDA Guidance 209, 213, and 263 which pertain to judicious and responsible use of medically-important antibiotics.</b>	X	X
<b>AC9. Sick or Injured Cattle</b>			
AC9a.	The operation maintains treatment protocols for sick and/or injured cattle.	X	X
AC9b.	The operation documents all treatments provided to cattle including animal(s) treated (ID), date of treatment, product administered and dose.	X	X
AC9c.	Withdrawal periods are tracked and strictly adhered to, ensuring cattle are clear of any animal health products when shipped for slaughter. If cattle are not clear when sold, detailed information is shared with the buyer of the cattle to include product, date administered and animal identification.	X	X
AC9d.	Cattle that are under extensive treatment are kept separate from large herd and monitored daily.	X	X
AC9e.	Non-ambulatory cattle are never dragged or lifted by its limbs using a rope or chain. Rather, if an animal not able to move on its own needs to be moved, it is rolled into a loader bucket and secured.	X	X

<b>AC10. On-Farm Euthanasia</b>			
AC10a.	<b>Non-ambulatory cattle unable to eat or drink, or not showing improvement within 36 hours of managed care are humanely euthanized. If the farm veterinarian determines that an animal cannot be successfully treated, it must be humanely euthanized immediately.</b>	X	X
AC10b.	Euthanasia is completed using an approved method, as noted in the Bovine Practitioners Guide.	X	X
<b>AC11. Facilities</b>			
AC11a.	Working facilities are clean, maintained in good working order and repairs are performed in a timely manner.	X	X
AC11b.	Water tanks or troughs are cleaned routinely and provide fresh, clean water to cattle.	X	X
AC11c.	Fences in grazing and drylot situations are maintained and repairs are made in a timely manner.	X	X
AC11d.	Pens housing cattle are scraped/cleaned routinely so comfort and health of cattle is optimized.	X	X
AC11e.	For operations utilizing barns to house cattle, considerations are provided for stocking density, bedding and air quality. Cattle comfort is observed during the audit to assess housing conditions.	X	X
AC11f.	The operation has a predator control program in place.	X	X
AC11g.	The operation addresses extreme weather conditions to ensure comfort for cattle. Extreme heat, cold and precipitation are considered for appropriate natural or man-made shelter, shade or protection.	X	X
<b>AC12. Transportation</b>			
AC12a.	Transporters of cattle have been trained according to the BQA Transportation program.	X	X
AC12b.	<b>All cattle loaded at the operation are considered fit for transport, able to handle the rigors of transportation and are not severely injured or ill. Severely injured or ill cattle can only be transported to receive additional / veterinary care.</b>	X	X
AC12c.	Incompatible animals are segregated in different trailer compartments, unless previously socialized.	X	X
AC12d.	Maximum transport time shall be no longer than 28 hours, in accordance with the 28-Hour Law. If transportation longer than 28 hours is required, cattle must be unloaded, provided feed, water and rest.	X	X
AC12e.	Equipment (loading/unloading chutes) and trailers used to load and/or haul cattle must be in maintained and in good repair.	X	X

# ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP STANDARD

## COW/CALF & STOCKER/BACKGROUNDER OPERATIONS

Criterion Number	Criterion	Cow/Calf	Stocker / Backgrounder
<b>ES1. Baseline Assessment – Land &amp; Water Resources</b>			
The operation has inventoried and assessed the ecological condition of the natural resources under management as well as other important components.			
ES1a.	<b>Egregious acts of neglect to natural resources under the producer’s control are not allowed.</b>	X	X
ES1b.	List/map vegetation and soil types present on the operation.	X	X
ES1c.	List/map of rare or sensitive species (flora and fauna) on the operation and habitat needed.	X	X
ES1d.	List/map of invasive species (plants and animals) that occur or are likely to occur on the operation.	X	X
ES1e.	List or map of major infrastructure (roads, fences, buildings, corrals, waterpoints and pipes/ditches). Condition of existing infrastructure (fences, roads, buildings, stock water resources) is in good working order.	X	X
ES1f.	Identified/documented/mapped freshwater resources present on the operation, including ponds, lakes, waterways, and wetlands.	X	X
ES1g.	Resource (grasslands, feed, water, etc.) contingency plans are in place for natural disasters such as fire, flood, drought, disease or pest outbreaks, predator conflict, or other.	X	X
<b>ES2. Goal Setting – Land &amp; Water Resources</b>			
Operation has utilized the baseline assessment to set goals for improved outcomes.			
ES2a.	Goals set regarding forage production optimization while also considering the needs of native plant and animal species.	X	X
ES2b.	Goals set for areas that are sensitive to grazing or other common management practices as well as goals for species that may pose management challenges (e.g., riparian, infestation of invasive species, predators, etc.).	X	X
ES2c.	Goals for improvements to degraded lands and unique or high value areas.	X	X
<b>ES3. Management Plans – Land &amp; Water Resources</b>			
The operation has effective written grazing lands management plans to guide actions and includes practices which match the needs of cattle to forage production, promote the growth of forage species and enhance pasture condition as well as water and nutrition management and work to achieve the goals set by the operation.			
ES3a.	Written grazing management plan includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practices that prevent/reduce soil erosion, support protected species if applicable, and control invasive and noxious weeds;</li> <li>• Identification of potential practices to maintain or improve habitat for plant and wildlife species;</li> <li>• Identification of potential practices to protect or enhance water resources;</li> </ul>	X	X

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring program to track progress toward objectives related to forage management, infrastructure management and improvements, soil/soil carbon, water, vegetation, and wildlife;</li> <li>Practices that support optimum forage and pasture roughage yields and promotes native plant and vegetative diversity;</li> <li>Actions and areas identified for grazing management includes associated practices that improve habitat for imperiled, rare/sensitive, threatened plant and wildlife species; and</li> <li>Practices that improve soil health (i.e. cover crops on existing farmed lands, rotational grazing and prescribed fire on grazing lands, etc.)</li> </ul>		
ES3b.	Actions are identified to proactively prevent water shortages in grazing areas and a water management plan for the operation has been developed.	X	X
ES3c.	Where applicable, water drainage is controlled to minimize erosion and control nutrients.	X	X
<b>ES4. Ongoing Monitoring, Documentation &amp; Adaptation – Land &amp; Water Resources</b>			
The operation conducts at least annual monitoring of forage resources, vegetation, soil condition, water resources, and native plant and animal species condition as well as economic and social indicators and has documented the management actions and monitoring results.			
ES4a.	Documented management actions and monitoring results informs the baseline inventory and condition outcomes from ES1a and provides insight to how a producer could achieve the outcomes.	X	X
ES4b.	Monitoring plan for forage, biodiversity, soil erosion, and water (extent of waterbodies, availability of stock water)	X	X
ES4c.	Demonstrate monitoring of key resources. Document actions taken in response to what was learned during monitoring.	X	X
ES4d.	Irrigation systems are routinely monitored.	X	X
ES4e.	Water lines for water delivery systems in production areas are managed to prevent drips, spills, leaks, clogging or other related issues.	X	X
ES4f.	Water for use in production areas is monitored for quality and availability.	X	X
ES4g.	Participation in research and development activities to evaluate practices or technologies and promote environmental and / or wildlife monitoring.	X	X
<b>ES5. Herd Management &amp; Efficiencies</b>			
ES5a.	An energy management plan for the operation has been developed and elements related to vehicles, equipment, lighting, heating, water systems and other energy-use areas are evaluated / assessed to implement improvement opportunities.	X	X
ES5b.	Vehicles and equipment with engines are maintained for optimal operating efficiency.	X	X
ES5c.	Practices are implemented to minimize dust and odor.	X	X
ES5d.	Consideration for renewable energy/alternative energy sources.	X	X
<b>ES6. Feed Management &amp; Sourcing</b>			
ES6a.	Feed inventories are managed and practices are employed to minimize waste and spoilage.	X	X
ES6b.	Feed is produced and/or sourced from locations that have <u>not</u> converted grazing lands, riparian areas, or forest into cropped land within the last five (5) years.	X	X

ES6c.	Feed is produced and/or sourced from locations utilizing reduced tilling practices and/or cover crops.	X	X
ES6d.	Feed is produced and/or sourced from locations with soil nutrient management plan in place for crop inputs (e.g., fertilizer, biologicals, organic replacements, etc.).		
ES6e.	Livestock is incorporated into the cropping system	X	X
<b>ES7. Waste Management</b>			
ES7a.	The operation can demonstrate that it reduces, reuses, and recycles. Examples include but are not limited to paper, aluminum, glass, and oil.	X	X
ES7b.	Solid waste / manure is regularly removed from concentrated production areas.	X	X
ES7c.	Manure application equipment is maintained in working order and cleaned to prevent spillage and to minimize odor generation.	X	X
ES7d.	Drainage and waste disposal areas are designed to avoid contamination of water sources and neighboring properties.	X	X
ES7e.	Manure application logs are maintained.	X	X
ES7f.	Mortality disposal is in accordance to laws and regulations.	X	X
ES7g.	<b>Site is well-maintained and litter/trash is minimized.</b>	X	X
<b>ES8. Mitigation of Negative Environmental Impacts</b>			
ES8a.	If utilized, fertilizers, pesticides, and fungicides are used, stored, and disposed according to the manufacturer's label on the product.	X	X
ES8b.	The person making decisions on chemical application has been trained in safe application of chemicals and ensures that modes of application and application rates comply with label recommendations.	X	X
ES8c.	<b>The operation complies with all laws and regulations related to chemical use of PPE and chemical storage, as per the manufacturer's label.</b>	X	X
ES8d.	The operation has a pest control program in place that addresses rodents and insects.	X	X
<b>ES9. Innovation, Leadership &amp; Continuous Education</b>			
ES9a.	The operation utilizes innovation to improve and enhance environmentally responsible cattle production.	X	X
ES9b.	The operation pursues educational opportunities to learn more about environmentally sustainable cattle production.	X	X

## PEOPLE & COMMUNITY STANDARD COW/CALF & STOCKER/BACKGROUND OPERATIONS

Criterion Number	Criterion	Cow/Calf	Stocker / Backgrounder
<b>PC1. Employee Training</b>			
PC1a.	The operation provides New Hire Orientation Training on the first day.	X	X
PC1b.	The operation routinely provides Safety Training to family and non-family members working at the operation, at least annually.	X	X
PC1c.	Safety trainings and meetings are documented, and records are kept of session dates and attendance.	X	X
PC1d.	The operation has a process in place, including training and provision of personal protective equipment (if applicable) to minimize risk of injury or illness from operation of equipment or general work tasks.	X	X
<b>PC2. Worker Health and Safety</b>			
PC2a.	The operation has a designated employee responsible for ensuring that all worker health and safety protocols are communicated to workers, and workers are made aware of who the designated employee is.	X	X
PC2b.	The operation may provide workers with equipment and clothing that is appropriate to their tasks and minimizes illness and injury.	X	X
PC2c.	Safety equipment and Personal Protective Equipment is in good working order and workers are trained on proper use.	X	X
PC2d.	Discussions and review of occupational injuries, illnesses, near-misses and deaths are conducted. The information is used to implement measures to improve rates.	X	X
PC2e.	<b>No abuse of workers is observed during the audit. If any abuse is observed, the site will not be certified.</b>	X	X
PC2f.	The operation has a method for non-family member employees to report workplace grievances.	X	X
<b>PC3. Facility Requirements</b>			
PC3a.	An emergency contact list is posted.	X	X
PC3b.	Emergency contact list includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Immediate emergency assistance number, i.e. 911</li> <li>2. Emergency numbers OTHER THAN 911 (e.g., sheriff, closest hospital, fire station, power company, state veterinarian, etc.)</li> <li>3. Name of facility/location of reference from nearest town</li> <li>4. Physical address of facility (or if not applicable, location reference)</li> <li>5. Directions to facility/location of reference</li> <li>6. Key personnel responsibilities</li> <li>7. Where to meet in case of a disaster</li> </ul>	X	X
PC3c.	Facilities are maintained in order to provide a safe environment and prevent injury to employees.	X	X
PC3d.	First aid kits are available in areas of work.	X	X
PC3e.	Fire extinguishers are easily accessible.	X	X

<b>PC4. Emergency Action Plan</b>			
PC4a.	The operation has developed an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) which minimally includes: contacts / associated phone numbers, farm/ranch map and contingencies in case of disease outbreak or natural disaster.	X	X
PC4b.	The EAP contains procedures regarding emergency and accident reporting and investigation; first response criteria for all likely emergencies; evacuation procedures; and a timeframe and person responsible for review and updating the EAP.	X	X
PC4c.	The EAP is reviewed annually.	X	X
<b>PC5. Worker Compensation</b>			
PC5a.	The operation has developed work agreements / contracts / job offers for full-time, non-family member employees. This agreement is written and may include: terms and conditions of employment; position title; deadline for acceptance; requested start date; compensation information; hours of work / work schedule information; and applicable benefit overview.	X	X
PC5b.	The operation pays at least minimum hourly rates required by law.	X	X
PC5c.	If the operation provides housing to workers, housing is supplied at market rates or at no cost. Housing conditions ensures security, privacy and sanitary conditions.	X	X
<b>PC6. Succession Planning, Professional Development and Advancement</b>			
PC6a.	The operation is working to develop a succession plan to allow for a smooth transition of the business and any assets with minimal disruption to the business and/or family relationships.	X	X
PC6b.	The operation encourages learning and growth opportunities for family and non-family workers.	X	X
<b>PC7. Community Engagement</b>			
PC7a.	The operation and its employees are involved in local initiatives that enhance the community and promotes good community relations.	X	X