

USDA PROCESS VERIFIED GENERIC MANUAL

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Increasingly, quality as related to traceability is becoming more important in food. To address this need in the meat industry, the United States Department of Agriculture has developed a standards certification program called QSVP. The purpose of the USDA Quality System Verification Program (QSVP) is to provide a USDA endorsed version of ISO 9000, a quality standards program that is globally utilized in a variety of industries. The QSVP system currently subscribes to a list of 20 requirements. Each of these requirements must be addressed in a participant authored manual. This manual details the production system for that particular group of producers and verifies the production claims through the use of the 20 USDA requirements.

Production requirements vary among groups that apply to be process verified. These requirements are self-imposed and are deemed the ‘things that the group is process verified for.’ Requirements can be as rigorous or as simple as a group desires. For instance, certain groups require nothing more than verification that an animal is of a particular breed and origin. Regardless of the requirements however, each group must address the 20 requirements in the QSVP system to verify that their requirements are fulfilled.

Once the group has written a manual that addresses these 20 points, they can submit it to the USDA and apply for an audit. Auditors will review the manual and then visit the actual production sites specified in the manual. They ask various questions related to the production practices documented in the manual and make sure that each participant can present the appropriate paper trail specified in the manual. Less than one percent of those who apply for certification of any program (e.g., process verified, non-hormone treated cattle, etc.) from USDA are granted certification immediately. Upon completion of an audit, there are generally some items that need attention and, once addressed, groups can reapply for certification. Only a handful of groups have been certified as USDA Process Verified nationwide.

The ‘generic’ manual, developed by K-State Research and Extension, was based off work done with a natural beef program that is undergoing process verification. By working closely

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with this group, K-State was able to participate first hand in the steps needed to achieve process verification including the writing of a process verification manual. This generic manual was developed with the intention that other groups would be able to learn from the knowledge K-State Research and Extension received while working to achieve process verification. Funding for this project was provided by Agricultural Marketing Resource Center and Kansas Cooperative Development Center.

The 'generic' training guide was developed to help simplify the entire quality system manual by focusing specifically on the producers' requirements. The training guide includes examples of all the paperwork and documentation that is the producer's responsibility to maintain. Throughout both the manual and the training guide, you will see the term "<program name>" used. The use of the term is simply to show how your specific program name can be inserted and the entire generic manual can be adapted to meet the needs of your own program.

The generic manual was developed specifically for natural beef. The group on which the manual was based had very rigorous process verification points. The generic manual was somewhat simplified to be applicable to more producer groups. In the end, four process verified points were chosen to represent a 'natural' beef program.

- No growth hormones
- No sub-therapeutic antibiotics
- No antibiotics during the finishing phase
- Source of origin verified

Most producers are likely to only use the fourth point, source of origin verified, because that is what they will most likely adopt in their operation. But we chose to present four points to demonstrate that other points could easily be adopted for your program's operation.

When writing and implementing a process verification program, it is important to get verified for things that are already being done within your group or operation. At the same time, the points must be valid and must mean something to a customer or ultimate consumer. More information about process verification is contained on the USDA web site

(<http://www.ams.usda.gov/lsg/arc/audit.htm>). This site contains information about groups that are process verified as well as some of their process verified points. It also lists the 20 points needed to be addressed in process verification manuals. These 20 points are the same points addressed in the K-State generic manual.