



VPP Beef Niche Market Cow earns a premium - BCS #3

**DQC**  
Dairy Quality Center  
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# BEEF TRIM



Unworthy of selling into the VPP Beef Niche Market - BCS #1

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Southwest Region

## Communicating With Your Cows?

*Dr. Tom Fuhrmann is the owner of Dairy Works™ and noted dairy industry consultant*

Some of the most experienced livestock growers agree that they can communicate with their animals. They know what signs/ symptoms to look for that may indicate potential health concerns. For example, checking the consistency and quality of manure is a common practice. Yup, we agree that visual monitoring of the animal and their environment is essential.

So how do you train someone else to know what to look for? Establishing standards of ideal health allows you to have a tool to 'measure' against. Daily visual animal assessments are important and knowing when to take action protects your bottom line.

How do you know if someone in the swimming pool needs help? The first time their head goes under water? When they are coughing for air? Or when they sink and don't re-surface? As you guessed - always take action at the first sign of trouble. The same is true for lameness. Do your employees know when to take action? (Theme music from "Rocky" playing in your head) Your employees protect your herd, your income and their jobs!

Dr. Tom Fuhrmann states that if a cow is limping she is in PAIN! Any amount of lameness should not be acceptable. The November 18, 2011 article **Managing Lameness** in the *Progressive Dairyman* magazine still rings true for managing and preventing lameness. (Your veterinarian can access this as a Tech Sheet from your VPP Walk-through)

"Establish a culture that lameness is not an acceptable health problem on your dairy." Actually, if you take steps to identify even the smallest signs of lameness you can win the fight! Designating a person to be in charge is the first step. What else do you provide your employees? VPP dairies have a written plan in place. VPP dairies have set standards - visual and physical. VPP dairies are committed to follow through with protocols and withdrawal times or culling on a daily basis.

Speed, accuracy and the ability to know what to do are your tools in preventing lameness. Fuhrmann states that, "treatments that produce a failure to

correct the problem in 5 days are typically tied to inaccurate diagnosis." Ask your veterinarian to help establish the plan, protocols, and treatments. Ask him/her to regularly train and refresh your employees and herdsman on preventing lameness.

Fuhrmann says to, "Designate a worker to 'focus on' and deal with lame cows daily." He refers to 5 principles of Treatment:

1. Set standards, elevate the bar, lameness is not acceptable
2. Lame cows need immediate attention - make it someone's job
3. Train the employee - usually the issue can be corrected in 5 days if diagnosed properly
4. With your Veterinarian, write out treatment protocols for all conditions
5. Make sure you have facilities and space to work on lame cows

Fuhrmann notes specific lameness problems:

1. Foot rot
2. Hairy wart
3. Sole abscess or ulcer
4. Laminitis
5. Injury or overgrowth

Lameness means your cows are in pain. It also translates into pain for you as a financial loss when culling prematurely. Who is in charge of identifying lame cows at your dairy? Who follows up everyday to see if the diagnosis was correct? Follow Tom Fuhrmann's advice and tackle lameness every day.

