Verification Procedures

Verification is a new term for the CQA® program but it is not a new concept. Verification has existed in the program since its beginning, but the requirements are now more precise. Whenever producers are asked to describe how they ensure that the protocols they have laid out for procedures are actually followed, the answer and the actions that go along with it are a verification procedure. Such procedures are required for questions #11d (follow-up to feed mixing and delivery), #13c (follow-up to injection questions), #17c (water medication), #20e (medication use), and #22c (barbecue pigs) in the On-Farm Quality Assessment Form.

Verification is the periodic oversight of specific tasks. This is carried out by someone other than the person performing the task. This includes, but is not limited to, other staff members, a spouse or other family member (who may or may not work in the barn), consultants or, as a last option, your validator. The person who conducts the verification needs to be familiar with the written protocols and will make observations of the staff performing their various tasks.

The original CQA® program required some elements of verification, including that producers have a plan for reviewing records, ensuring proper staff training and follow-up, and a regular review of the protocols to ensure that they are effective.

Now, the requirements for verification are more explicit. In short, producers will be required to cover four points in their response to their verification questions:

1) Review written procedures at least annually or with any change in equipment, where applicable. This requires producers to consider whether the protocols that they have written are working effectively or whether they need to be modified to create a better fit with the staff, management style or the introduction of new equipment to the production unit. It is not necessary to make changes to protocols that are in place, but they must be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are still effective.
2) Review records at least once per year to ensure that they are being kept accurately. Review of records includes those records for all treatments (including water medication), feed mixing and sequencing, calibration records for feed mills and water medicators, where applicable, the Medication and Vaccine Usage Plan and veterinary prescriptions.
3) Observe staff carrying out the procedures at least once per year. This requirement simply asks that a verifier makes observations of staff as they carry out specific tasks to ensure that protocols are being met and in many cases is probably something that happens routinely but that we wouldn't normally think about.
4) Keep a record that the first three items were done. Verification records can be maintained on the related production record. For example, a verifier can simply sign-off after the last entry on the treatment records indicating that they were reviewed and then sign and date the entry for verification. If there were any problems, these should be noted here as well. The same thing can be done for all of the other records. If a producer chooses, a separate record form for verification may be maintained. It must include the date, what was verified (record, protocol reviewed, observation of staff), a note of any problems or discrepancies and the signature of the verifier.

For more details, the On-Farm Quality Assessment Form and the Producer Manual have been cross-referenced to assist in the development of this and all of the CQA® protocols.