



# Alabama Beef Quality Assurance: Avoiding Residues from Feed

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An important part of any animal production system is the feeding program. Providing a feeding program that meets the needs of the animals, whether it is forage, supplemented forage, or complete feed, is critical to success. However, meeting the nutritional needs of cattle, especially nonfed cattle, does not guarantee beef quality. A feeding program that meets the animals' needs and avoids toxins and residues will help ensure the quality of the beef produced.

Proper storage is important in maintaining feed quality feed after harvest or purchase. Grains should be stored in a building or containers that will not allow moisture, birds, rodents, or other contaminants to gain entry. Birds and rodents not only consume feed, but also can contaminate it through their droppings left in the feed and spread disease. Also, be careful of the type of container in which feed ingredients are stored. Never use a container that was originally used to carry any type of pesticide or other chemical not labeled for livestock feed. The residues from these containers could easily contaminate feed, which in turn would be an excellent source of residue problems in the meat. The same is true for using an old oil or solvent barrel.

Grains stored with a high moisture content or roughage harvested when too wet can quickly develop mold. Molds lower feed quality, and, if fed to animals, can make them extremely sick. Aflatoxicosis (aflatoxin poisoning) is a relatively common type of mold-induced poisoning typically found in warm weather. Aflatoxin can cause poor performance and abortions in pregnant animals, as well as sudden death in all animals. Consult your local Extension office or veterinarian regarding other molds on feed.

Several types of pesticides (insecticides and herbicides) used in crop production can cause residue problems in livestock when not used correctly. Do not store any type of pesticide near the feed supply. A leak or spill could again provide the avenue for residue contamination of the meat. Use only those pesticides labeled for use on pastures to be grazed or harvested for animal feed. Follow the label instructions and record

pesticide use. If feed is purchased from others, ask if pesticides were used and at what time in the growing or harvesting season they were applied. Make sure all feeds are of high quality and residue free.

Several feed additives and medicated feeds can be used in producing market animals. However, medicated feeds must be used carefully and according to label directions. Withdrawal times are designated on all medicated feeds. Whenever feed additives and medications are used, record the date, compound, and feeding level. Consult a veterinarian for a recommendation on the appropriate use of these ingredients.

The major point to remember in feeding animals is to ensure that no contamination of the meat being produced can take place by possible harmful residues in the feed supply.

## Summary

- Check feedstuffs for color, temperature, odor, moisture, and foreign matter.
- Maintain quality by proper storage techniques to keep moisture, rodents, and birds away from the feed supply.
- Be especially careful to use clean, residue-free containers to store feed.
- Apply all pesticides carefully and judiciously to any feed produced to avoid possible pesticide contamination.
- Use medicated feeds with care, since most have withdrawal times that must be followed before slaughter of the animal is allowed.
- Always consult a qualified nutritionist if you have questions about the use of various feed ingredients or compounds.



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**For more information**, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

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