

# ***Survey of Oklahoma Quality Beef Network Stakeholders***

***Final Report***

***2001***



**This study was jointly funded by the  
*Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association* and  
the *Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service***

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### 2001 Final Report



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## Introduction

The Oklahoma Quality Beef Network (QQBN) is an aggressive, grassroots initiative developed by beef producers. The primary objective of the program is to add value to weaned calves and capture a portion of this value for both the cattle producer and the cattle buyer. Although the QQBN is a multi-phase project, the initial phase focuses on health and management practices around the time of weaning to reduce costs associated with sickness, improve animal performance, and improve beef product quality. As part of the ongoing development efforts, a survey was conducted to determine strengths and weaknesses of the Network as it stands today, and to identify changes that might encourage further participation while upholding the QQBN quality standards.

## Methodology

Data for this study were collected from the 2001 QQBN participants. The QQBN is a process verification and marketing system, currently focusing on management practices around the time of weaning. In general, certification requires weaning calves a minimum of 45 days prior to sale; healed castrations and dehornings; clostridial and bacterial vaccinations with boosters; and third party verification. Specific details of the QQBN certification requirements can be viewed at [www.ansi.okstate.edu](http://www.ansi.okstate.edu).

During 2001, the QQBN marketing component focused on public auctions where QQBN certified cattle were sold at six locations throughout the state. Livestock markets sponsoring an QQBN auction during the fall of 2001 included: Apache Livestock Auction, Apache; Holdenville Livestock Auction, Holdenville; Idabel Stockyards, Idabel; OKC West, El Reno; Winter Livestock, Enid; and Woodward Livestock Auction, Woodward. Stakeholders were identified as **producers** if they applied the preconditioning practices required for QQBN certification and sold cattle at the QQBN sponsored auctions. **Buyers** were identified as those individuals who bought QQBN certified cattle at these auctions. The accessible population was determined from the list of individuals who marketed or purchased cattle at the six QQBN sponsored auctions.

Researchers, Extension educators, and Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association (OCA) personnel developed the survey instrument with the objective to characterize and (or) quantify: 1) demographics of the survey participants; 2) perceived market and animal performance effects of the QQBN; 3) perceived weaknesses and strengths of the QQBN; and 4) participants' attitudes and perceptions regarding historical and future participation in value-added calf programs. The questionnaire was duplicated in booklet form and packet distributed through the U.S. mail, January through February 2002, to QQBN participants. The packet included a cover letter explaining the purpose and intent of the research, the questionnaire, and a postage-paid envelope for the return of the completed survey instrument. The respondents were advised of their voluntary responses to any or all of the questions in the survey

instrument. A reminder postcard was mailed to non-respondents two weeks following the date of the first mailing. The post card mailing yielded few responses. Therefore, a second questionnaire packet was mailed on May 31, 2002, and non-respondents were again asked to complete and return the survey. Following these attempts to increase the response rate from the OQBN participants, the cutoff date for returning the survey instrument was set for June 21, 2002.

A total of 161 stakeholders that either bought or sold cattle through the OQBN during the fall of 2001 were identified (Table 1). One hundred eleven producer surveys and 50 buyer surveys were mailed. The response rate was higher for producers (45%) compared to buyers (35%).

**Table 1.** Participation and survey response by producers and buyers in the OQBN 2001

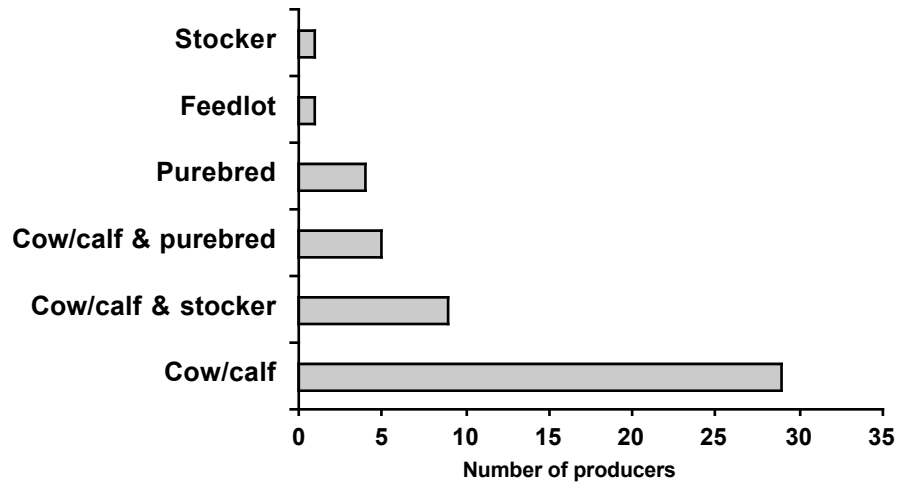
	Producers	Buyers	Total
Participants	111	50	161
Respondents	50	18	68
Response rate	45.0%	36.0%	42.2%

# Results

## Producers

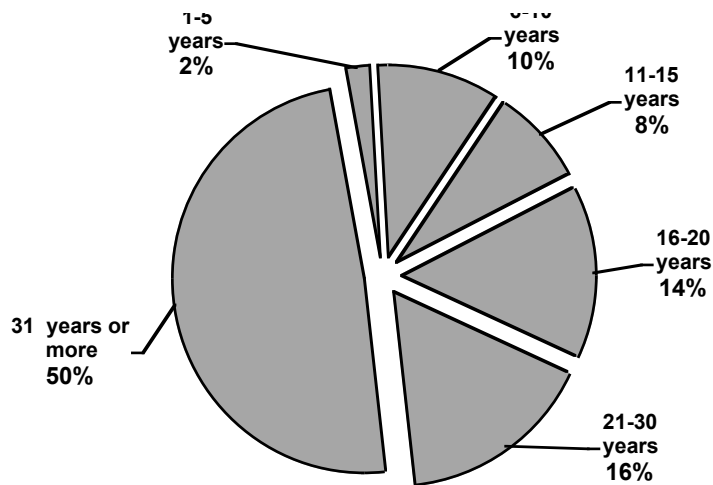
### Demographics

Seventy-six percent of the producers classified their operations as commercial cow/calf or a combination of cow/calf and stocker, although various enterprises were represented (Figure 1). Furthermore, 94% of producers considered their cattle operation to be privately or family owned. Forty-two percent of the responding producers considered their occupation to be full-time farming and ranching, whereas 30% of respondents were part-time farmers and ranchers with part- or full-time off-ranch jobs.



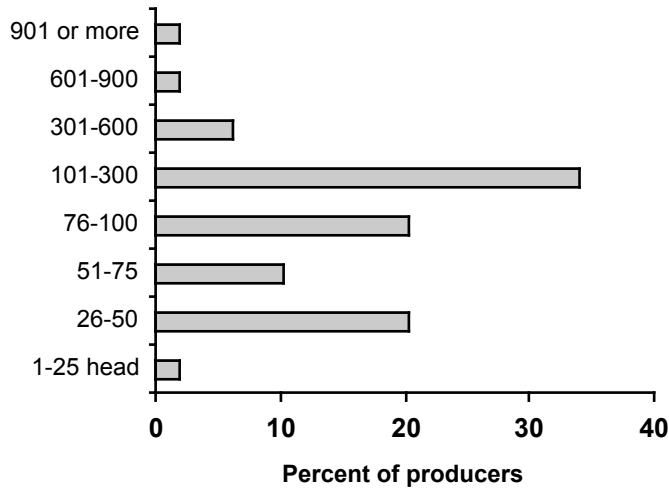
**Figure 1.** Distribution of producers by type of beef operation

The typical QBN producer had been involved in the beef industry for a long period of time. In fact, almost fifty percent of respondents had been involved in the beef industry for more than 31 years, and an additional 30% of producers had been involved in the industry between 16 and 30 years. Although, these QBN participants were well experienced in the beef industry, few had extensive experience preconditioning cattle. Over 45% of producers had less than 5 years or no previous experience preconditioning cattle.



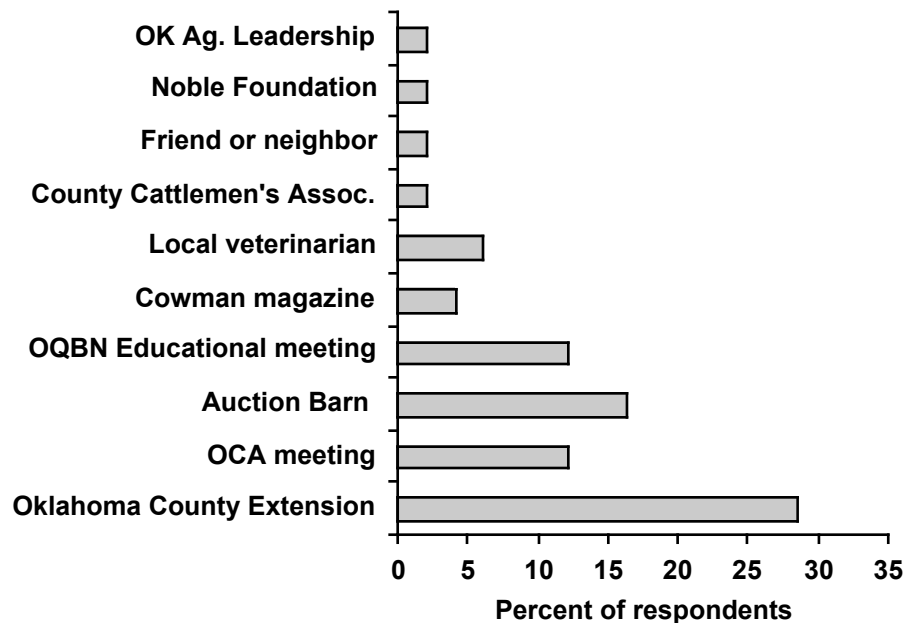
**Figure 2.** Producer years of experience in the beef industry

A slim majority of producers that chose to participate in the OQBN can be characterized as small to mid-sized operations (Figure 3). Fifty-two percent of respondents owned less than 100 cows, while 48% owned more than 100 cows.



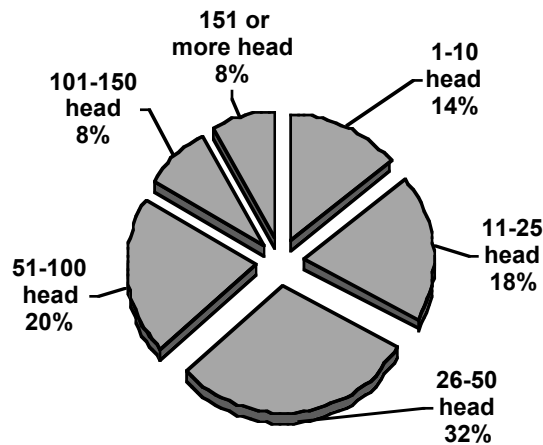
**Figure 3.** Distribution of producers by size of brood cow operation

The majority of producers learned of the OQBN and the associated certification requirements through a wide variety of means (Figure 4). However, Extension educators, OCA, and livestock auction personnel had the greatest impact on awareness and education. The OQBN educational meetings were jointly conducted by the OCA and the Oklahoma Extension Service.



**Figure 4.** Distribution of respondents by selected means of awareness

The number of cattle marketed by any one producer through this value-added management and marketing system ranged from two to several hundred. A total of 64% of producers sold less than 50 head of cattle in any one OQBN auction. Since 48% of respondents indicated they owned more than 100 cows, this data may suggest that many participants marketed only a portion of their calf crop through this system during the first year.



**Figure 5.** Distribution of producers by number of head sold at an OQBN sale

### Normal marketing and health practices

Producers were asked about practices that they normally applied in their operations prior to any participation in the OQBN. As shown in Table 2, most of the producer respondents (92%) applied treatment for internal parasites; however, slightly fewer respondents (86%) applied treatment for external parasites. Similarly, most producers indicated that they normally dehorned their calves and used beef quality assurance recommendations regarding animal health practices.

**Table 2.** Distribution of OQBN respondents by normal health practices

Normal health practices	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Treatment for internal parasites	46	92.0
Treatment for external parasites	43	86.0
Dehorned/closely tipped horns healed	41	82.0
Administer vaccines/health products subcutaneously in neck area	42	84.0
All animal health products administered according to preconditioned certified sale regulations	42	84.0
Total number of respondents	50	100.0

### **Marketing practices**

The majority of respondent producers (80%) indicated that they normally market their cattle through livestock markets. It should be noted that this frequency may not be an accurate reflection of industry-wide marketing preference because the respondents had all marketed their certified OQBN cattle through a livestock auction.

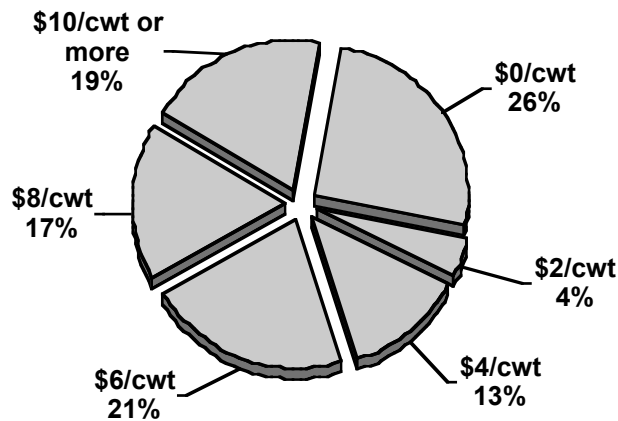
**Table 3.** Distribution of OQBN respondents by where they normally sell their cattle

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Local livestock marketing facility	40	80.0
Retain ownership	11	22.0
Stocker operator	5	10.0
Preconditioning firm	2	4.0
Direct to feedlot	1	2.0
Stockers and feedlot	1	2.0
Seedstock at ranch	1	2.0
Private sales	1	2.0
Neighbors and friends	1	2.0
Total number of respondents	**	**

\*\* Total equals more than 50 and 100% because several respondents chose more than one method.

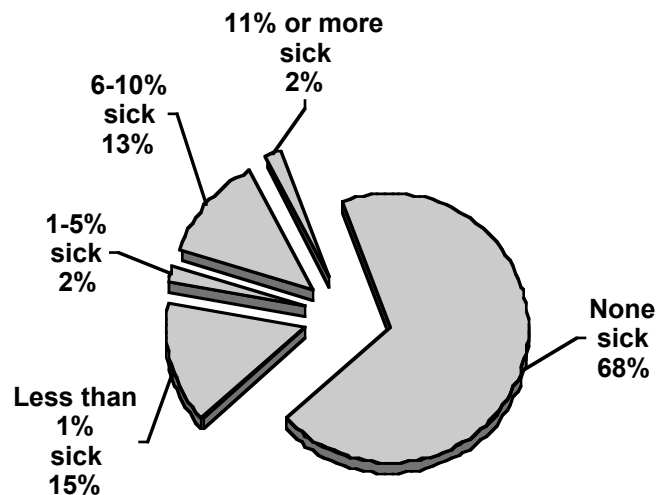
### **Perceived market and animal health effects**

The perceived premium received through participation in the OQBN, above the regular market price, was quite broad (Figure 6), ranging from none to over \$10/cwt. A significant premium for the cattle and low cost weight gain during the 45-day or longer weaning period is necessary for this type of value-added calf program to be profitable for the producer. In the absence of producer profitability, the OQBN will not be sustainable. The majority of producers perceived that their cattle received a \$4/cwt or greater premium. This data indicates a very positive beginning for the OQBN. However, the fact that 30% of respondents perceived that they received \$0 to \$2/cwt premium (considered too low to be profitable) presents a challenge to the Network. Stakeholders and OQBN leadership must identify factors that affect this market premium and work to develop the OQBN system in ways that create true value for the beef industry. Continued improvement in the OQBN system and quality of OQBN cattle should lead to lower incidences of marginal premiums.



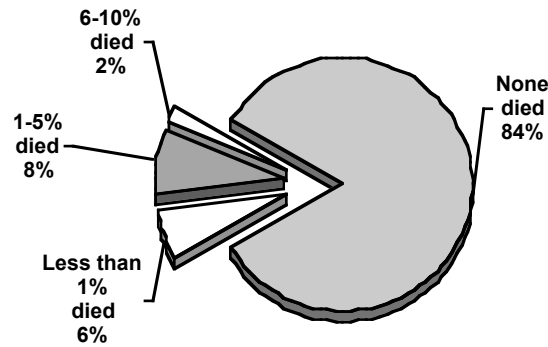
**Figure 6.** Distribution of respondents by premium received over the regular price

In value-added preconditioning programs, like the QBN, at least a portion of the risk associated with cattle sickness and death loss is transferred from the buyer back to the producer. This risk is a serious concern and consideration for potential QBN participants. However, the incidence of sickness and death loss should be much lower when calves are weaned at the ranch of origin and managed according to QBN guidelines. In fact, 68% of respondents indicated that they had no sickness at all during the weaning period, and an additional 15% had less than one percent incidence of sickness. Fifteen percent of producers indicated that 6% or more of their calves became sick at some point during the weaning period. This suggests an opportunity for the QBN in the future. Any reduction in the incidence of sickness at the home ranch should result in healthier, better performing cattle after the marketing or shipping event and eventually higher quality beef carcasses.



**Figure 7.** Distribution of respondents by percentage of sick cattle

Ninety percent of the respondents suggested that they had no or less than one percent of death loss during the preconditioning phase, while 10% of the producers incurred significant death losses at 1% or greater. Obviously, a reduction in the incidence of death loss at the home ranch will result in significantly reduced costs for the producer.



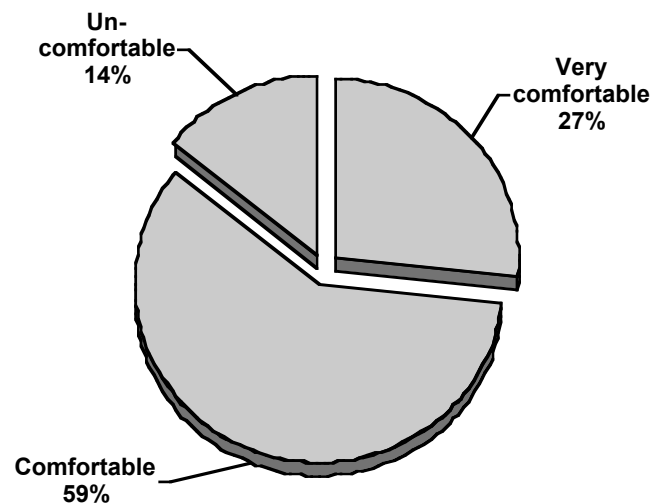
**Figure 8.** Distribution of respondents by percentage of cattle that died during preconditioning phase

Table 4 shows the distribution of producers by need of information prior to participating again in the OQBN program. Although, 40% of producers did not ask for specific information, the survey suggests that nutrition, forage management, and genetics (breeding) should be targeted as educational priorities.

**Table 4.** Distribution of OQBN producers by need of further information prior to future program participation

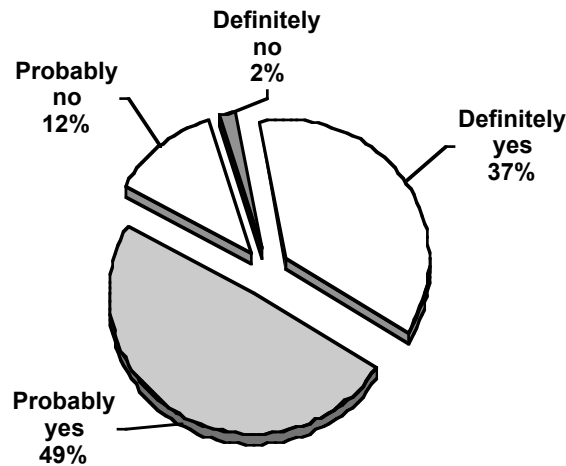
Need of other information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
None	20	41.67
Nutrition	8	16.67
Forage management	6	12.5
Breeding	5	10.4
Cow herd management	3	6.25
All of the above	3	6.25
More specific procedural information from OCA	1	2.1
Sale spec's and prices elsewhere	1	2.1
Dates of sale early	1	2.1
Total number of respondents	48	100.04

Another important question asked of the OQBN participants was related to their level of comfort with the certification process. If producers perceive that the certification requirements are taken seriously, by other producers and by those coordinating the process, the integrity of the program should remain intact and improve over time. In general, producers had positive perceptions about the enrollment and certification process. Figure 9 indicates that 86% of respondents felt comfortable or very comfortable regarding the certification process. Nevertheless, the challenge for Network stakeholders is to move a higher percentage of participants from the uncomfortable or comfortable category into the very comfortable category.



**Figure 9.** Distribution of producers by perceived level of comfort with OQBN certification process

In addition, producers were asked about their participation in the OQBN in the future based on their experience this first year. The data show (Figure 10) that 86% of respondents plan to participate again, whereas 14% indicated that they would not. Some of the negative responses are due to the fact that some producers perceive that they have the opportunity to market their cattle independent of the OQBN with similar results. This very well could be the case for operations that have already built or have the opportunity to build a reputation for high quality cattle. Others suggest that the OQBN marketing opportunities were too limited because most locations provided only one sale date between October and December where OQBN calves were featured.



**Figure 10.** Distribution of OQBN producers by probability of future participation

### **Attitudes toward value-added calf programs**

In order to learn about attitudes and perceptions of producers toward the OQBN program and other value-added calf programs, the researchers and Extension specialists identified eleven different statements that were included in the survey (Table 4). The response scale included strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. The respondents were asked to select one response that best described their attitude toward each statement. As these and all previous data are evaluated, it should be noted that only OQBN participants were surveyed. The fact that these producers chose to participate in this program could have a strong influence on survey results.

The statement “Sorting calves by large uniform drafts should improve the price I receive for my cattle” had the highest level of agreement among producers. Almost all of the responses (96%) agreed or strongly agreed that they would receive benefits by having the ability to market their cattle in large uniform groups. Obviously, larger, well-managed operations have more opportunity to benefit from marketing large, uniform groups of calves, compared to smaller operations. It would appear that most of these producers recognize the need to select marketing alternatives or develop alternatives that allow them to take advantage of this technique.

The second highest level of agreement was the statement “The Oklahoma Quality Beef Network program helped me to become more knowledgeable about the future of the beef industry.” Those attitudes suggest that the OQBN served as an effective educational tool.

One important issue that concerned producers was the lack of marketing standards among value-added calf programs or “certified calf sales.” Evidently, producers perceive the need for more consistency among or even within these programs. Too many programs with various requirements, marketing methods, and certification processes lead to confusion and ultimately a lack of effectiveness.



Interestingly, three quarters of participants were in agreement with the statement that marketing preconditioned calves was a more profitable marketing and management alternative in their situation. In accordance with this result, the producers were generally in agreement that the OQBN was profitable for them in 2001. However, 24% of respondents indicated that the OQBN was not profitable. The long-term goal of the OQBN is to add true value to Oklahoma calves in a way that creates more value **and** profit for both the seller and the buyer. At the same time, the Network should play a role in identifying educational needs and providing educational opportunities to aid producers in lowering their production costs.

Based on results from this survey, some beef producers perceive that the industry adequately rewards them for preconditioning calves, while over 60% perceive that the industry does not. However, 65% of respondents disagreed that the OQBN was no different than any other preconditioning program.

The majority of producers were not concerned about the possibility of losing identity of their calves in commingled sale situations. On the other hand, 39% of the producers saw this potential problem as a legitimate concern.

Sixty-five percent of the producers did not agree that the extra feed and health costs associated with preconditioning were a major deterrent in their participation.

Seventy-one percent of respondents disagreed that preconditioned calves always bring a premium price compared to “untreated” calves. In the past, many producers have been disappointed because their preconditioned calves have sold for a similar price compared to freshly weaned, non-vaccinated calves. There are many factors which may have contributed to this problem. Some of these factors include lack of buyer education, poor marketing/advertising, too few preconditioned cattle available at a given location, and lack of trust regarding the process verification system. The Network was designed to assist cattlemen in overcoming at least some of these detrimental factors.

Conventional wisdom suggests that producers are more likely to participate in value-added calf programs, such as the OQBN, when calf prices are relatively low. However, only 15% of these respondents agreed with this statement.



**Table 4.** A summary of Oklahoma Quality Beef Network participant attitudes regarding preconditioned, certified calf sales

Attitudes toward OQBN	N	Response, percent of total			
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Sorting calves by large uniform drafts should improve the price I receive for my cattle.	50	--	4.0	48.0	48.0
The Oklahoma Quality Beef Network program helped me to become more knowledgeable about the future of the beef industry.	47	--	14.9	61.7*	23.4
The lack of market standards for certified calf sales has the possibility of leading to a wide variation in prices between sales for preconditioned calves in Oklahoma.	46	6.5	15.2	60.9*	17.4
On the average, the benefits of selling preconditioned calves are more profitable.	48	2.1	22.9	52.1*	22.9
The Oklahoma Quality Beef Network program allowed me the opportunity to make my operation more profitable.	49	2.0	22.4	51.0*	24.5
The industry currently rewards cattlemen for preconditioned calves.	48	4.2	56.3*	35.4	4.2
OQBN is no different from any other preconditioned program.	45	15.6	48.9*	33.3	2.2
Selling large drafts of cattle and commingling them to acquire uniformity through the OQBN program increases the possibility of not being able to identify the rightful owners.	49	20.4	40.8*	32.7	6.1
Financing additional feed and health management practices makes it too costly to consign calves to certified sales.	49	16.3	49.0*	26.5	8.2
Preconditioned calves always receive a premium over "untreated" calves.	48	6.3	64.6*	16.7	12.5
I would be more interested in this program if the market price was lower.	46	28.3	56.5*	10.9	4.3

\*indicates median response

## Reasons for participating in the QBN

The producers were asked to select one reason for their participation in the QBN. As expected, there was a wide range of reasons for participation. However, it is clear that the producers' most frequent reason for participating was to achieve a premium price for their calves (Figure 11).

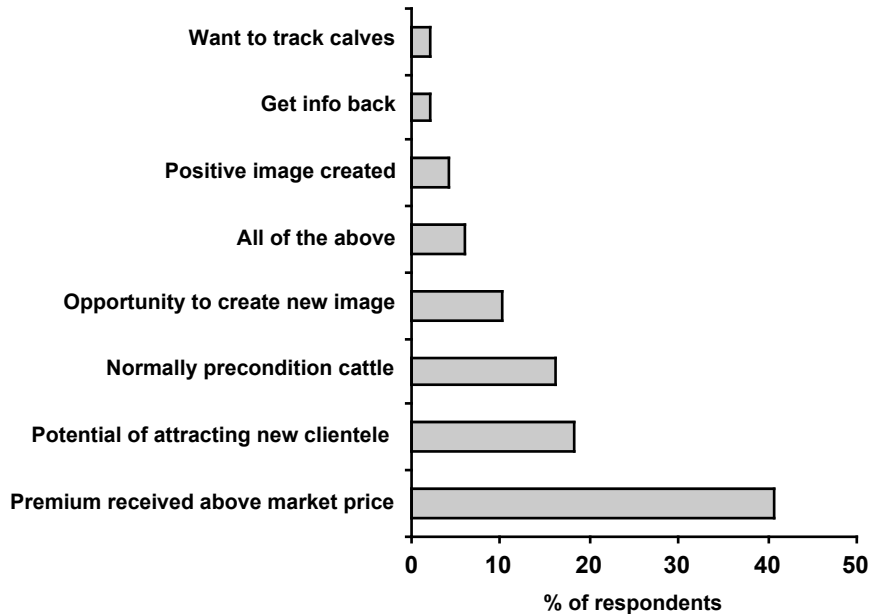
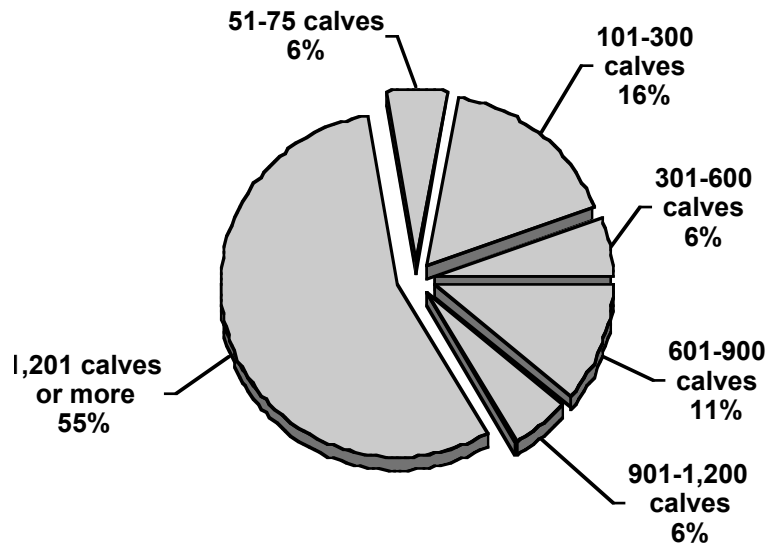


Figure 11. Distribution of respondents by reasons of participation in the QBN

## Buyers

### Demographics

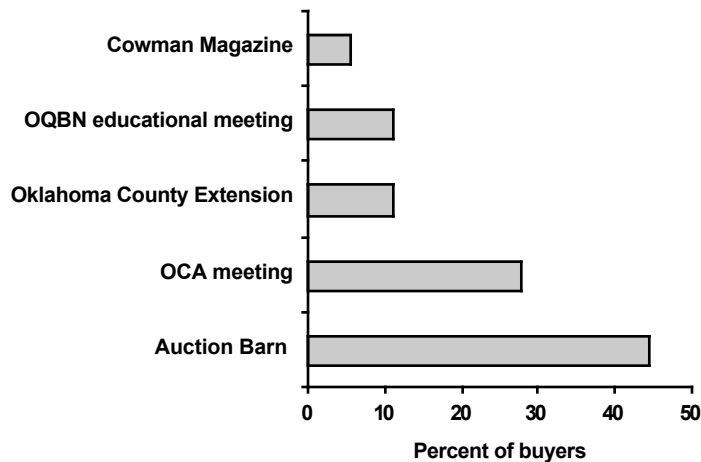
A typical buyer at the QBN-sponsored auctions was a well-educated individual with a bachelors degree or higher, who was between 51 and 60 years old. In addition, they had been in the cattle industry for more than 5 years. Half of the buyers had been buying cattle for 21 years or more, and almost one-third of them had been buying cattle between 10 and 20 years. Almost 80% of these buyers purchased QBN cattle for his/her own operation. These buyers normally purchased a large number of cattle every year. Slightly more than half (55%) of buyers purchased more than 1,200 head annually (Figure 12).



**Figure 12.** Distribution of buyers by number of head purchased annually

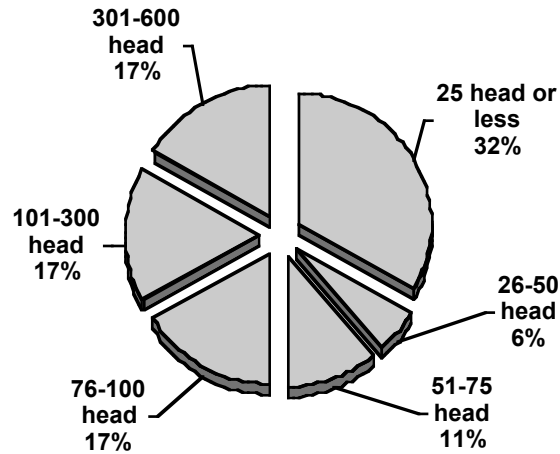
Buyers purchased cattle from a wide variety of sources. However, almost 80% of OQBN cattle buyers normally purchased cattle from local livestock marketing facilities. While the remaining buyers responded that their major source of cattle was from private operators, commission companies, other certified sales, and satellite auctions.

Livestock market operators were the most frequent source of awareness for buyers regarding the OQBN program and sponsored auctions (Figure 13). Cooperative Extension and OCA meetings were other important sources of awareness. The OQBN educational meetings were jointly conducted by the OCA and the Oklahoma Extension Service.



**Figure 13.** Distribution of buyers by selected means of awareness

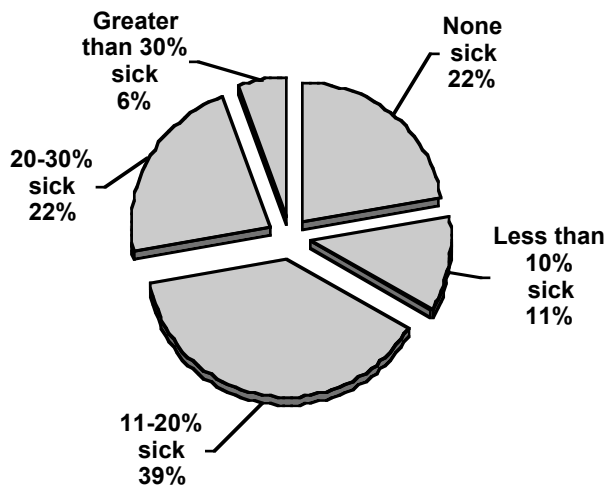
Volume of cattle purchased by any one buyer was evenly distributed (Figure 14). However, approximately one-third of buyers purchased 25 head or less at any certified auction.



**Figure 14.** Distribution of participants by number of head purchased at an OQBN sale

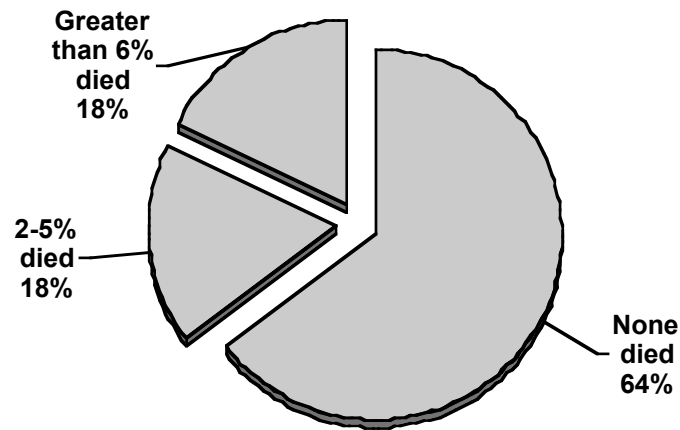
### Perceived market and animal health effects

Data shown in Figure 15 indicates that 33% of respondents experienced less than 10% sickness in the OQBN cattle that they purchased. However, 28% of buyers indicated that they had greater than 20% sickness. Certainly these data suggest room for improvement in terms of long-term animal health. These improvements should be achievable through three key areas: a more stringent certification system, improved producer education, and the development of a feedback system to inform producers of their cattle's health and performance after the marketing event.



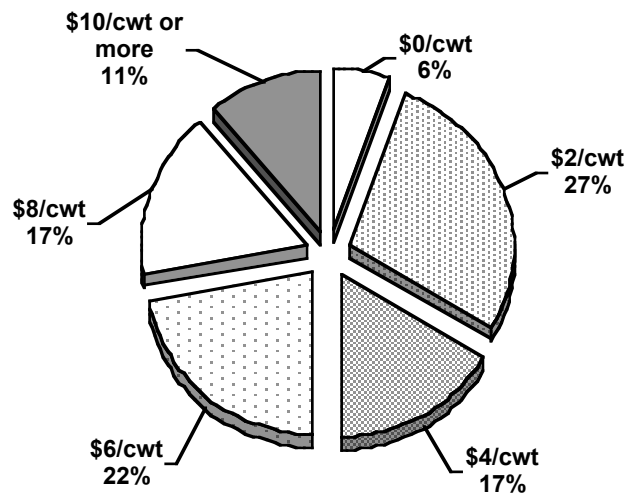
**Figure 15.** Distribution of OQBN buyers by percentage of sick cattle after auction

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of cattle buyers indicated that they did not have any death loss (Figure 16). However, 18% of the buyers indicated that they experienced greater than 6% death loss. Similar to the frequency of sickness data, these data suggest room for improvement in terms of animal health after the cattle are marketed.



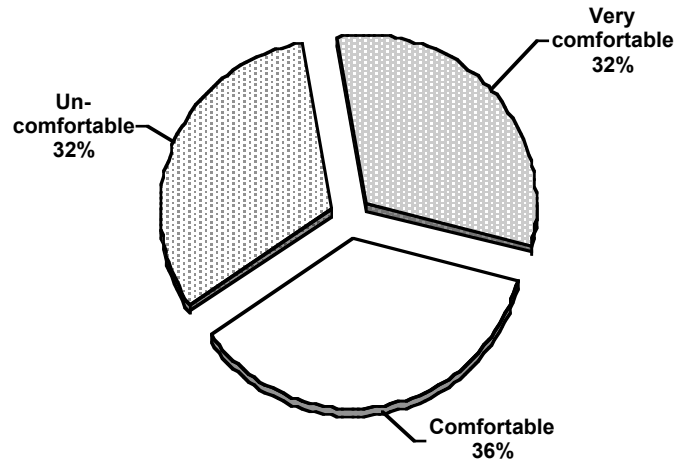
**Figure 16.** Distribution of buyers by percentage of cattle that died after certified sale

As shown in Figure 17, the premium paid by buyers was quite broad, ranging from \$0 to well beyond \$10/cwt. These data agree with the “premium received” data collected from the producers.



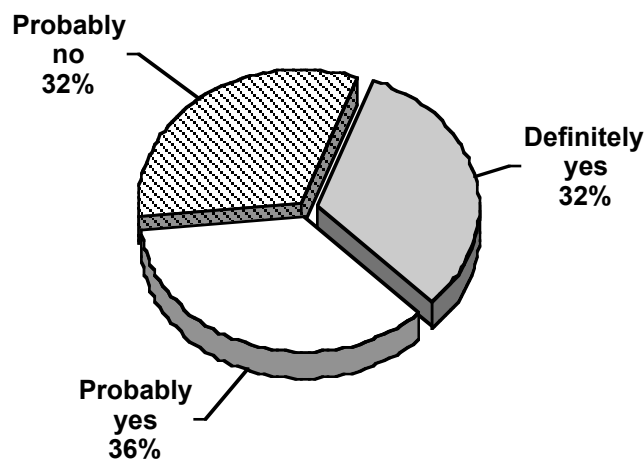
**Figure 17.** Distribution of buyers by premium paid over the regular market price

The results show (Figure 18) that buyers were evenly divided in terms of their comfort level with the certification process, with nearly one-third in the very comfortable, comfortable, and uncomfortable categories. While many buyers evidently had a good overall experience, these data, coupled with the animal health data, indicate that several buyers were disappointed in the performance of the OQBN cattle that they purchased. Evidently, several buyers believe that at least part of the needed improvement is related to the certification process.



**Figure 18.** Distribution of buyers by perceived level of comfort with OQBN certification process

Buyers were asked if they would participate in future OQBN auctions. While 68% of respondents indicated that they definitely or probably would participate in the future, nearly one-third indicated that they would not.



**Figure 19.** Distribution of buyers by probability of future participation in OQBN

Buyers were also asked what additional information they would like to have before buying OQBN cattle, compared to what was made available during the first year. Table 5 shows the frequency of selections for various pieces of information that could be provided. In general, this data indicates that most buyers would like to know more details regarding whether calves had been creep fed, whether and when they had been implanted, and how much feed (concentrate) the cattle had received during the preconditioning period.

**Table 5.** Distribution of buyers by type of additional information requested

Type of information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Whether or not calves had been creep fed	4	23.5
Whether or not the calves had been implanted and when	4	23.5
Specific information on amount of feed received	3	17.7
Immunizations	2	11.8
More specific genetic information	1	5.9
Identify as ranch	1	5.9
Treatment of respiratory diseases	1	5.9
Origin of cattle	1	5.9
Total number of respondents	17	100.1

### **Primary reason for participation in OQBN auctions**

The reasons why buyers participated in the OQBN certified sale were quite diverse (Table 6). However, almost 80% of buyers choose the benefits related to preconditioned cattle as their main reason for participation. For instance, slightly more than half of buyers (55.6%) chose one of the following statements “Preconditioned cattle saves labor and makes money in the long run,” and “Preconditioned cattle have better over-all performance than untreated cattle.” In addition, the statement “The opportunity to buy large drafts of uniform cattle which have been treated in a similar manner,” was the third major reason for buyers’ participation in the OQBN program.



**Table 6.** Distribution of buyers by reasons of their participation in the OQBN certified sale

Reason of participation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Preconditioned cattle saves labor and makes money in the long run	5	27.8
Preconditioned cattle have better over-all performance than untreated cattle	5	27.8
The opportunity to buy large draft of uniform cattle which have been treated in a similar manner	4	22.2
The opportunity to create a new image for the industry	1	5.6
I normally buy preconditioned cattle anyway	1	5.6
Try a few and see the results	1	5.6
Research Project	1	5.6
Total number of respondents	18	100.2

### **Producer and buyer comments**

Producers and buyers were given the opportunity to make open-ended comments on the survey instrument. Twenty producers and seven buyers chose to do so (Tables 7 and 8). These comments are revealing in terms of participants concerns and suggestions for improvements, and in many ways, these comments reflect results of the frequency data presented in the previous sections.



**Table 7.** Producer comments (names and places were removed; no other edits were made)

<p>Preconditioned sale is a great idea. The year 2001 was a rough year for preconditioning cattle. Many of the small operators that I know are not set up to wean most of their calves on their place.</p>
<p>Need uniformity of cattle at the precondition sales. Need to adhere to the guidelines of the sale.</p>
<p>OQBN is the best and only thing the small operator has to get a fair market value for our cattle. I hope the program continues. Two of us were able to ship a load &amp; split the trucking.</p>
<p>OQBN is a good idea; however, the cost of preconditioning and vaccines makes it a near breakeven event.</p>
<p>Need to get feedback of quality of cattle we are marketing so we can make changes to improve our products.</p>
<p>I thought the sale was great, I take pride in preconditioning calves. The one thing that would prevent me from participating again would be the cost of the vaccines you require. Thank you for your efforts.</p>
<p>I appreciate your efforts to make for a better market for preconditioned calves, but I did not like being limited to one sale date out of the year. Although I got a good premium for my calves at the _____ sale, it occurred at the low fall run and the premium did not compensate for weaning, preconditioning, and added work and feed. I liked the video auction that I participated in the year before better as I could load the calves on the truck right off the cow with no preconditioning, trucking, or extra labor expense at a preset price that was @ \$5/cwt premium over a regular price and was able to sell in early September when prices are consistently better.</p>
<p>I was told a story about being able to follow my calves. I was told we would get information back on how my calves graded out and carcass things, so if I am falling short on my calves I can improve. I think this program can be great and would like it to improve. Thanks.</p>
<p>Preconditioning program would probably have worked on a more ordinary year, but since I have had to wait 45 days and watch the price steadily decline, it was not a good situation. _____ did his best to support the prices but the interest by buyers was not there. I lost the cost up feeding and vaccination.</p>
<p>I believe my cattle would have bought more if they were not mixed with others. I would not be interested in selling at any more commingled sales.</p>
<p>Know sale date in plenty of time.</p>
<p>Make all sellers follow the rules. There were too many bulls and horned calves.</p>
<p>I believe that I benefited as much from the sorting of my calves into large groups as I did from preconditioning. I really liked the way that _____ sorted and conducted their sale. I would prefer to take my calves to a sale in late Nov or early Dec at _____.</p>
<p>What I did not like about the sale was my black calves mixed with other colors. I believe blacks bring more money, and this is the reason I breed and raise them. The sale should have been held on a day other than regular, sale barn sale day. There are other improvements that I am sure we are aware of. Thanks.</p>
<p>I would like to see the scan tags to also have a bangle tag with a number you can read at a distance.</p>
<p>The _____ sale at _____, the cattle were sorted and culled well. The _____ OQBN sale was not intense enough, I saw horned cattle, pink eye cattle, one calf with blue eye. These cattle should have been pulled and sold as singles. The OQBN will live due to QUALITY or die because of the lack of it.</p>
<p>I did not like my cattle being mixed with other cattle. I am not sure, I want a lot of premium for preconditioned cattle. I just want everyone else to be highly discounted. I probably will try the sale again but I am not currently looking for an alliance to belong too. P.S. As you could see I did not give OCES high marks, and I went to OSU! They are always a day late and a dollar short of the real world.</p>
<p>1. Eliminate the calves that don't fit groups from the sale completely-sell thru regular sale next day. 2 Try to attract a wider range of buyers- not just the 2 or 3 that normally come to the sale anyway. 3 make sure cut off date for weaning is strictly adhered to.</p>
<p>I don't think the person who checked the calves before the sale was very accurate. i.e. proof of vaccination was verbal only. I think all cooperators should be required to purchase the same medicine from one place as the tags are required. A special price could be arranged for such a large number of cattle worked.</p>
<p>Being a small cow/calf producer in close proximity to _____ enabled me to achieve a much higher market price primarily through co-mingling into uniform lots. However, the creep pellets and hay required during 45 days precondition time erased a considerable amount of \$ premium received.</p>

**Table 8.** Buyer comments (names and places were removed; no other edits were made)

I bought 97 calves to try the program. They were put in pasture. We find no differences in these calves from the calves we buy from neighbors and those bought at the auction. We have our own program we followed when recruiting calves. I know the precondition program will work better for some.
Our load of calves looked good upon arrived after 200-mile head-shrink was only .61%. We doctored 78 within a week, most did not look too sick however. After iced/cold in Dec and warming at end of Dec/Jan, we had to retreat a few of calves doctored in Nov. Dec. 28, 1 died has become crippled as well as sick. 1/23 1 died treated off/on severed 1 weeks....
Provide all info (origin, vac cert, feed info) with calves at the time sale. Ensure all calves have been identified before commingling. Identify raised vs purchased calves going through the sale. Ensure all calves are delivered to marketing point at least one day prior to sale (or be open to negotiate shrink)
Keep buyers informed of future OQBN sale dates
The cattle at the _____ sale in the OQBN were exceptionally fat and too full. This significantly reduced the price per cwt relative to cattle in thin or medium flesh that day. Fat cattle always be discounted at sale time. Some of the cattle that are in deals made up of different owner's cattle are not sorted very good. Sale barns tend to broad brush the sorting. If you want value from large uniform lots, you have to convince sale barn operators to be stricter in sorting. They'll nod their head on this then let an inexperienced guy sort the cattle.
1. I question the consistency of the verification process. 2 Need information on shrink w/in sale facility 3. we treated way too many cattle for being bona fide preconditioned cattle; therefore question if the problem is in the actual preconditioning or stress in sorting and/or commingling at sale points. 4. We paid too much premium for the value that was received. Truly hope the program can be made to work, however our experience overall was negative. I would hope that EID cattle will be followed through the packing plants. We need to know how preconditioning affects value when killing cattle on the grids. Surely w/EID already in place we can get this carcass information to participants throughout the program
Find a definitive way to determine or monitor if the cattle have been treated as prescribed.

## Conclusions

Data in this survey characterize producers and buyers that chose to participate by selling or purchasing cattle through the OQBN in 2001. The survey also quantifies attitudes of producers and buyers regarding the OQBN and value-added calf programs in general. Producers clearly state that their primary interest in participating in this program is to gain a premium for their calves. It seems that cattle buyers believe that preconditioned cattle do indeed represent added value and that they are willing to pay a premium to procure those cattle. In general, producers were positive regarding the premium that they received and their overall experience with the OQBN during this first year. Health problems at the home ranch were minimal. Producers generally indicated that the preconditioning and marketing system was profitable. The incidence of sickness and death loss after the OQBN auctions was higher than expected. Unfortunately, benchmark data were not available to determine if this was due to an unusually high frequency of health problems industry-wide. Based on this information, the OQBN has modified several procedures to insure that the certification guidelines are strictly followed. The OQBN will continue to work diligently to identify critical control points that will minimize the incidence of sickness after the marketing event. An individual or group animal health and performance data feedback system is needed. This system would facilitate change, thereby creating further value to buyers over time. The OQBN is off to an excellent beginning and has tremendous potential to positively impact the beef industry in Oklahoma.

