

# 2021 CSU Extension Internship Application

## *Colorado Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) Programming, Including Producer Needs Assessment*

**Mentors:** Libby Bigler (Colorado BQA Coordinator), Dept. of Animal Sciences, College of Agriculture, [libby.bigler@colostate.edu](mailto:libby.bigler@colostate.edu), (970) 491-2333; Jason Ahola and Lily Edwards-Callaway (CSU Animal Sciences faculty); and Travis Taylor (CSU Extension – Golden Plains)

**Region:** Fort Collins with some travel around the state

The Colorado Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) program has successfully provided a substantial amount of extension and outreach programming to cattle stakeholders across Colorado for more than 20 years. Nationally, the program serves as a model state BQA program, is housed within CSU's Department of Animal Science and is jointly-funded by the department, CSU Extension, and the Colorado Beef Council. The program is seeking a summer intern to assist with program dissemination in partnership with regionally-based extension staff, including conducting a state-wide producer needs survey, which will inform planning and decision making for the program's long-term, strategic plan. This outreach- and research-based project was identified as a priority for the Colorado BQA program during the recent annual meeting of the Colorado BQA Advisory Committee, consisting of Colorado beef and cattle industry stakeholder representatives including CSU Animal Sciences, CSU Extension, Colorado Beef Council, Colorado Cattlemen's Association, and Colorado Livestock Association. The intern will report to Libby Bigler, the Colorado BQA State Coordinator, and will work closely with these stakeholder groups and their members, as well as connect with CSU Extension's Livestock and Range Program Reporting Unit.

In 2020, due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, the Colorado BQA program's ability to train and certify cattle producers at in-person events was greatly limited. Additionally, several market-driven national beef industry-wide initiatives have emerged that compel state and national BQA program administrators to enhance efforts in certifying more producers in BQA, while also expanding efforts to verify implementation of BQA program guidelines. Consequently, based on documented demand from stakeholders, the Colorado BQA Advisory Committee recommended conducting a state-wide BQA-based cattle producer needs assessment/survey. This survey, which will be the primary responsibility of the intern, is intended to:

- Evaluate cattle producer perspectives about the CO BQA Program's existence, access, availability, educational materials and resources, and educational approach
- Document key drivers among beef producers related to becoming BQA Certified
- Estimate the impact of the CO BQA Program on the quality and value of cattle
- Inform CO BQA Program strategic, long term planning to target needed areas of improvement

The intern will assist in conducting a comprehensive 25-question mail-in survey (funds to complete the survey by covering printing and mailing costs have been acquired from the CO Beef Council, but support for personnel to execute the survey is lacking). Survey questions will address the following areas: BQA awareness, knowledge, participation, and certification status; reasons for participating in BQA, including barriers; on-farm or on-ranch adoption of specific BQA practices like avoiding residues, care and handling of cattle, and environmental stewardship.

Working with campus-based and off-campus CO BQA Program personnel including approximately 12 county-based CSU Extension BQA trainers, the selected intern will be key in survey development, distribution, data collection and analysis, as well as completion of a report that will inform Colorado BQA strategic planning. Further, the intern will work to assist Colorado BQA program administrators with strategic program planning. Additional scope of work will include other supplemental Extension-based county-level initiatives relating to BQA certification, verification, and research. Specifically, the intern will have opportunities to build skills in event planning and coordination for area BQA trainings involving county Extension staff and larger-scale producer education events including the NCBA-sponsored Stockmanship & Stewardship program. The intern will also have the opportunity to contribute to other BQA focused research projects, and interact with feedlots and cow/calf operations to assist with development of written secure beef supply biosecurity plans.

The impacts of this internship program on CSU Extension will include an increase in producer participation in CSU Extension programs including CO BQA, improved quality and quantity of Extension programming offered to cattle producers, improved delivery of extension programming (including CO BQA) via modifications to program delivery based on survey responses, increased engagement between stakeholders and Extension at a unique student-to-producer level (vs. traditional faculty-to-producer level), and student exposure to careers in Extension at CSU.