It is spring and that means branding time across cattle country.

As producers are finishing calving season and preparing for branding/processing, it is important to review Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) guidelines.

Here is a look at the key BQA principles from Rob Eirich, UNL Extension educator and Nebraska director of BQA:

Discuss calf vaccination protocols with your veterinarian to ensure a strong herd health program.

Make sure everyone is focused on the importance of “low stress cattle handling” … the lower the stress, the better the response from vaccines.

Select vaccines that can be administered subcutaneous when possible.

Keep vaccines out of ultraviolet light and in a cooler at proper storage temperatures.

Prepare (mix) modified live vaccines as need and not more than one hour prior to administration.

Use clean administering equipment (syringes).

Select proper needle size for young calves; 16-18 gauge, to 5/8-inch needles are recommended.

Change needles every 15 head or each time the syringe is reloaded.

Give all injections in the neck region.

Maintain the proper processing records.

BQA is a commitment to the beef consumers that producers use the best management practices (BMPs) to produce safe, wholesome beef products. Product quality and integrity start at day one of a calf's life through focusing on care, well-being and health of animals entrusted into the producer's stewardship.

For more information about Nebraska Beef Quality Assurance or to get BQA certification, contact Rob Eirich, UNL Panhandle Research and Extension Center 308.632.1230 or reirich2@unl.edu.