

Moving from a Supply Chain to a Value Chain using Livestock Traceability

By Melissa Speirs, Project Coordinator

Pascal Bouilly, Veal Farmers of Ontario Board Member and On-Farm Service Technician for Delft Blue Veal Inc., was one of three speakers discussing the future of livestock traceability at the 2016 FarmSmart Conference at the University of Guelph this past January. Bouilly spoke to a crowd of about 40 people, Dr. Temple Grandin, professor at Colorado State University and world renowned animal handling expert, among them.

Bouilly explained that the need to track the origins of the calves raised by Delft Blue Veal drove the development of a traceability program. In 2007, the system was modified an accounting program. 2010 brought the introduction of Radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags. In 2012, the current program, TRAX-IT®, was implemented. Through the use of RFID readers, handheld terminals, and laptop or desktop computers, Delft Blue Veal can trace the origins and movements of their calves throughout the supply chain. Information such as price, weight, movement, treatments, and withdrawals can be recorded and accessed at any time via a calf's RFID tag and management number. The abattoir also scans the RFID tags and sends Bouilly information on each carcass' individual dress weight and price.

This information allows Bouilly to track trends and rank suppliers of calves on factors such as early mortality and overall performance. Bouilly can then give this information back to the dairy farms, allowing them to work together to improve calf management from birth. At this time, only origins of calves bought directly from dairy farms can currently be accurately tracked. Calves from dealers or auctions often do not come with any information on location of origin. Bouilly hopes to see this change in the future.

Bouilly is also planning to use the information to set an antimicrobial use benchmark for the company. This will allow Delft Blue to know which drugs they are using and why, and make management changes to reduce unnecessary antimicrobial use. Further, the information on calf health and origin can be integrated with data from automatic feeders, creating a whole picture of calf health.

Bouilly states that the reason for the traceability changes were that clients have been requesting information on the origin, feeding practices, and history of calves they are buying. He says, "Traceability allows us to move from a supply chain to a value chain concept."

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/foodsafety/traceability/groberprofile.htm>

