

SOUTH DAKOTA CERTIFIED ENROLLED CATTLE™

Natural Program

What is the “Natural” program and what does it imply?

- The Natural program is the newly created next step in the SOUTH DAKOTA CERTIFIED ENROLLED CATTLE™ (SDCEC) program.
- The term, “Natural,” is defined by USDA when used in meat packaging as minimally processed and does not contain artificial coloring or flavoring. When the term is used in conjunction with live cattle, it implies certain herd-management practices but does not have an official definition.
- For the SDCEC Natural program, “Natural” means that no hormones have been administered to the cattle, and the cattle have been raised without the use of antibiotics or ionophores. Also, no feeds containing animal products, animal fats, or marine products, with the exception of milk and milk products have been fed to enrolled cattle. SDCEC Natural cattle must also comply with the requirements of the SDCEC base program.

How does the SDCEC Natural program compare to NHTC or “Drug-free?”

- NHTC, or “Non-hormone Treated Cattle,” is an official USDA certification for cattle raised without the administration of hormones. For cattle to be certified NHTC, the producer raising them must be certified and audited by USDA.
- “Drug-free” is not defined by USDA and can mean something different to every producer who makes the claim. Generally it indicates that cattle have been raised without the use of antibiotics.
- The SDCEC Natural program encompasses both NHTC and drug-free characteristics at the live-cattle level, although the program does not currently have USDA-NHTC certification.

What *exactly* is restricted from use on cattle enrolled in the SDCEC Natural program?

- No natural or synthetic exogenous (coming from outside the animal) growth promoting or sex hormones can be administered at any period during the lifetime of the cattle. This includes zeranol, estradiol, progesterone, testosterone, trenbolone acetate, melengestrol acetate, and all reproductive hormones including progesterone, prostaglandin (PGF_{2A}), gonadotropin releasing hormone (GnRH), follicle stimulating hormone (FSH), and luteinizing hormone (LH).
- No antibiotics at either therapeutic or sub-therapeutic levels can be administered at any period during the lifetime of the cattle. This includes penicillins, cephalosporins, aminoglycosides, sulfonamides, fluoroquinolones, florfenicol, macrolides, tetracyclines, and ionophores.
- No animal products, with the exception of milk and milk products, can be fed to enrolled cattle.

What is allowed for use on cattle enrolled in the SDCEC Natural program?

- All disease vaccinations
- Coccidiostats
- Internal and external parasite control
- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs approved for use in cattle

****Many producers who don’t use implants or other hormones and have rigorous vaccination programs already raise a large number of cattle that would qualify as “Natural.” Utilizing a program such as SDCEC Natural would provide another marketing tool for those animals.****