Commercial On-farm Food Safety Management Systems

John McQueen
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Dairy Farmers' (ADF)

Background

- In 1995, ADFF, DRDC and 3 co-operative dairy companies began a joint project to develop an on-farm HACCP scheme.
- It was to be a complete quality assurance (QA) programme.
- ADFF believed it was important to be involved to ensure it would be practical in its application and would clearly show our farmers were producing safe food.

Dairy First

- Dairy First was launched in June, 1997.
- It was very comprehensive but was designed to be a flexible QA system.
- It allows each company to design their own QA programme to address their customers requirements.
- Each dairy company develops relationships with their customers and they have varying requirements.

Dairy First (cont.)

- In other words - one on-farm QA programme does not fit all commercial circumstances.
- Not all elements of an on-farm HACCP scheme relate to food safety - customers have other requirements that companies need to meet, eg cell counts, protein and butterfat content, animal health, animal welfare, type of purchased feeds, etc.

Dairy First (cont.)

- Dairy First was a HACCP programme that provided the opportunity to incorporate all these issues if there was a commercial reason to do so.
- With different on-farm programmes operated by each company, we believed it was important to have a set of common essential food safety issues that all company schemes would incorporate.

Essential Elements

- These were about minimising any possibility of agricultural and veterinary chemicals, microbiological organisms and physical contaminants finding their way into milk and meat on farm.
- This must be supported with an audit protocol for each dairy company's on-farm QA programme.

Essential Elements (cont.)

- Animal Health and Treatments
  - Correct use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals
  - Vaccinations etc
  - Antibiotics
  - Withholding periods
  - Recording system of treatments, dates, withholding periods.
- Animal Identification System
  - Adequate identification of treated animals (to ensure treated animals milk and meat is not marketed).

Essential Elements (cont.)

- Livestock Introduced
  - A check system to ensure introduced animals are monitored for animal health and those that have been treated with agricultural and veterinary chemicals are identified.
- Water Supply (Stock and Shed)
- Stock Feed Supplies (Home Grown and Introduced)
  - A check system to ensure withholding periods are observed for stock feed supplies that have been treated with chemicals - both home grown or bought.
  - Other contaminants.

Essential Elements (cont.)

- Milk Cooling and Storage
  - In accordance with Australian Standards.
- Cleaning and Sanitation
  - Adequate cleaning programs
  - Good quality water supply
- Dairy Maintenance Programme
  - Maintenance of cooling and milking equipment

Essential Elements (cont.)

- Shed and Surrounds and Waste Management
  - Minimise risk of contaminants
  - Minimise contamination of water courses
- Training and Appropriate Competencies
  - Can be formal and/or informal
- Appropriate Records to Verify Actions Taken

Conclusion

- The essential elements are part of a common sense approach to good dairy farming practice and have always been part of normal daily farming operations.
- On-farm QA systems provide customers and consumers with confidence that the raw product is produced in a safe food environment.

Conclusion (cont.)

- The non food safety elements of QA must be based on commercial customer focused arrangements, and not have a regulated one model fits all approach.
- Dairy First has led to a number of on-farm QA systems being implemented by dairy companies that are commercially sensible yet still incorporate the non-negotiable elements of safe food production.