D. Good Production Practices

Most producers already follow good production practices. Few, however, have taken the time to document their daily activities. Documentation indicates that the producer understands the process, and demonstrates his/her responsibility to it — a necessity in a HACCP program.

Good production practices minimize potential problems. Each farm is unique, which makes blanket statements unworkable. This manual is intended as a general reference, to provide guidelines and general approaches. Hopefully, the information provided will help you to recognize the things you already do. At the same time, we hope it provides new ideas which you can include in your farm management program.

Good production practices are discussed in this manual under the following main headings:

1. Purchasing
2. Animal Handling
3. Sanitation and Building Design
4. Medical Supplies: Use and Storage
5. Feed Handling
6. Biosecurity
7. Water
8. Shipping, Marketing and Transport
9. Personnel Training
10. Deviation and Notification

Critical Control Points and "Level B" Good Production Practices

A critical control point (CCP) is a specific point, step or procedure in the production process where a control can be applied to manage a hazard. "Level B" good production practices (GPPs) control the hazard (within acceptable limits) that has been identified at any production step.

The generic HACCP plan for the CQA® program has three critical control points and fourteen "Level B" GPPs. These areas require procedures which are categorized under the headings Monitoring, Deviation and Verification. Monitoring procedures are the day-to-day or routine activities conducted by your staff to ensure that a protocol is being followed. Deviation procedures are steps that are followed when something goes wrong. Verification procedures are carried out by someone other than the person responsible for the day-to-day procedures and monitoring. Verification is conducted periodically, to ensure that monitoring and deviation procedures are being carried out correctly.

When CQA® translated identified hazards into the program materials, it was necessary to have questions in the On-Farm Quality Assessment Form and additional information in the Good Production Practices section of the Producer Manual that would assist producers in recording or creating their protocols to describe how things are done, and how monitoring and deviation procedures are carried out.

In some cases, the protocols and the monitoring procedures are found within the same question. For example, if you look at the question about avoiding injection site abscesses, the answer requires that you provide a description of the way in which injections are given in order to minimize the risk of creating abcesses. As well, part of controlling abscesses is daily monitoring of animals for visible signs. Therefore, if an abscess is treated, any treatment and deviation will be recorded, since that treatment record requires documentation of the reason why it was used.

In other cases, specific questions about monitoring and deviation will be asked. Monitoring

questions, and the answers you provide, form part of your protocol. They describe what records you keep and how they are reviewed to catch any problems that may arise. Deviation questions ask what you would do if something went wrong. In other words, deviation questions enable you to develop a plan of action that can be followed if you find that a mistake has been made.

Verification is addressed by questions and answers that detail how you ensure that procedures are followed. Verification is an additional step that ensures your protocols are working. They are conducted by someone other than the person who completes the day-to-day tasks. Producers are strongly encouraged to ask their herd veterinarian (if that person is different from the validator), feed or equipment salespeople/technicians, family or staff members to verify procedures and records from time to time. In the event that none of these people are available, it is acceptable to ask the program validator to conduct this verification activity. Your verifier must have access to the written protocols and monitoring and deviation procedures. Armed with that information, the verifier can review records and ask questions that will help him/her to confirm whether tasks are being conducted as per the written protocol. If you have someone available to verify your protocols other than your CQA® validator, consider making verification a routine part of your protocol. Verifiers provide an extra checkpoint, to make sure that things are running smoothly.

In the Producer Manual, some information has been presented in text that has been highlighted in a blue box. These points relate to things that you must do as part of your protocol for critical control points and "Level B" GPPs. The exception to this rule is section D10 Deviation and Notification, which deals specifically with how you write deviation procedures for your protocols. Section D10 applies to all "What would you do if something went wrong?" questions which are part of critical control points and Level B GPPs.

Other text has been presented in blue font. These bullets are also "must do" points. They refer to other program requirements in the shaded questions.

You will also notice that other bullets have been worded in such a way that they indicate that you must perform a certain task. These items may not be evaluated during your validation but are good production practices that minimize food safety hazards and contribute to the strength of your operation.