

Get the Results You Want!

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Ben Franklin had it right when he wrote "A stitch in time saves nine". In other words, taking care of a problem early in the process saves a lot of fixing later.

Think about the way that we have managed dairies in the past. Most often, when something breaks, we fix it. When the DHI report comes back we realize there's a problem and we search for cures. When a disease outbreak occurs, we rush to stem the flood. Too frequently, we use data collected on past performance to try to manage the future of our farms. This is like trying to drive your car down the highway while looking solely in the rearview mirror.

I believe there is a better way to manage a dairy to ensure the results you want so you can achieve the standard of productivity and profitability you deserve. For several decades now there has been a growing trend in the food industry to adopt a control system known as HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points, pronounced hassup) in order to avoid the risk of producing unsafe food products.

HACCP is a system created in the late 50's by the Pillsbury Company as they prepared to provide food for space flights. At that time, they recognized that chemical or bacteriological contamination of space-bound food was an unacceptable hazard. The prospect of an astronaut with a case of salmonellosis, while stuck in a space suit for three days was a hazard they wanted to avoid. End-product testing did not provide enough certainty that the food sent into space was absolutely free of hazards. What Pillsbury settled on was a system of describing the processes used to produce a food and then, through scrutiny of every step in that process, coming up with the points and practices by which introduction of a hazard could be prevented.

Today, HACCP has been adopted by food manufacturers and has become the basis for USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS), resulting in a 50% reduction in salmonella in processed poultry and 30% reduction of e. coli in processed pork and beef in only 6 months. It is now widely recognized throughout the food industries as the most effective system for preventing a hazard rather than fixing it once it has occurred. In time, I believe HACCP will become a mandatory part of milk production on the farm as the first step in a food production chain.