

## Suggested instructions about how to use VACQA website items

1. Suppose, you are active in routine veterinary curative work, or are already active too in veterinary herd health and production management programmes. In these cases, you could start with the SWOT assessment sheets on your dairy farms. However, we strongly suggest to you not to use all SWOTs at the same time on a particular dairy farm, but rather **one SWOT at a time**, hence follow a *stepwise approach*. First start with the problem area that the dairy farmer has indicated to you during a previous inventory discussion meeting. Maybe just one or two subclusters will be sufficient to get the farmer acquainted to the tool. Some SWOTs are quite extensive to use as a first introduction.

If the farmer is used to that tool, you can consider to expand to another SWOT area. It is quite de-motivating for a farmer to be forced to handle everything at the same time without having the opportunity to make his own adoption of the tool. So, be patient and coach the farmer and/or his co-workers. On very large dairy farms it is worthwhile to consider and arrange the organisation of the farm-work first (tasks, responsibilities, farm production targets, performance evaluation, corrective measures) before starting applying the SWOTs.

To facilitate your work in the field, we suggest to download the **field scoring sheets** of that particular SWOT; they can function as simple scoring sheets from which you conduct the input into the website programme. But then we have to emphasize to you that you should familiarise yourself with the scoring levels and definitions first. To that purpose, help-text and various sorts of illustrations are provided throughout the VACQA website programme. VACQA could provide on-site training and coaching on request through E-mail and for a settled fee.

2. In order to expand your activities to the HACCP-like applications, we strongly advise you to first have a close look into the **literature** on this matter. Examples of relevant literature are Noordhuizen & Welpelo (1996, The Veterinary Quarterly); Lievaart et al. (2005, The Veterinary Quarterly); Cannas et al. (2006, The Veterinary Quarterly); Vieira et al. (2007<sup>1</sup>, submitted); Boersema et al. (2007, submitted); Vieira et al. (2007<sup>2</sup>, submitted). In the literature list provided on this website specifically the numbers 13—15—30—31—46—60—61—62—63 are relevant. Just when you feel

much more comfortable with the concept and principles of HACCP and its application in general you can expand your activities to that area.

3. Before moving into the design of a HACCP-like plan for a dairy farm, it could be advisable to have a discussion with the farmer about priorities; these priorities may trigger conducting a SWOT. Based on the results of this SWOT, general risk items can be put together into a Working Instruction or a specific **Good Dairy Farming** code of practice.
4. HACCP-like applications should also be conducted in a **stepwise procedure**. The scheme with the **12 steps** are helpful to that purpose.

Be sure that in this situation too, you follow the priorities in hazards (disorders) as determined by the on-farm **HACCP-team** (farmer + manager + veterinarian). Provide the farmer with the proper coaching; be patient and do not overload the people. Make sure that the foundation you are building is strong enough to be sustainable.

5. The line you can follow in the design of the HACCP-plan could be as follows:
  - use the inventory sheet (downloadable under “What is Vacqa”) to find out [1] where this farmer/manager perceives the weaker areas on his farm in which he feels not satisfied at all, and [2] to set priorities in selecting the first SWOT from the VACQA website.
  - take notice of the most relevant hazards and check the associated risks by using the SWOT sheets from the VACQA website
  - design a management overview: what occurs when and through whom and how, based on the first discussions with the farmer and HACCP-team. Check as far as practically possible this overview with real life on location.
  - design the respective flow diagram(s) of the processes under consideration, as detailed as deemed necessary
  - discuss both previously named items thoroughly with the farmer and his co-workers until agreement is reached
  - design working instructions for those areas that you consider pivotal for function of the HACCP-plan and hazards of concern; check these items on feasibility and positive benefit-to-cost ratio with the farmer or manager

- conduct additional investigations (sampling of milk, urine, faeces, blood etc for laboratory examination) when deemed necessary and supportive for decision-making
- design the monitoring part of the HACCP-plan, time-scheduled with aims over time, and the corrective measures; the latter should also show a positive benefit-to-cost ratio if possible.

Further instructions you can find in the HACCP download parts on the Vacqa website. There you also will find examples of **Good Dairy Farming** codes of practice and working instructions.

6. Finally, at the end of the HACCP download you can find several additional short papers. For example on economic losses due to diseases and the calculation there-of; or on general issues regarding herd health and production management, or on welfare, or on biosecurity. Other functional website links are provided too. You can directly look further into relevant sources of information related to the issues presented by the VACQA website.