Recently, the staff of Quality Milk Production Services celebrated their ISO 17025 accreditation. After a long period of hard work, the American Association of Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) granted the Ithaca, N.Y. QMPS Microbiology Laboratory accreditation for the identification of mastitis-causing microorganisms.

The accreditation documents were presented to QMPS staff in a ceremony, Dec. 10, 2009. New York Commissioner of Agriculture Pat Hooker; Dean Mike Kotlikoff of the Cornell Veterinary College; Director Dr. Bruce Akey of the Animal Health Diagnostic Center; veterinarian Brenda Moslock-Carter of Keseca Veterinary Clinic in Geneva, N.Y.; dairy farmer Sam Potter of Spruce Haven Farm and Research Center in Union Springs, N.Y.; and others spoke about the importance of Quality Assurance for the dairy industry.

The speakers highlighted the importance of testing validity and traceability for the dairy industry and shared their experiences with the QMPS laboratory. They noted QMPS is the only milk quality and mastitis laboratory in North America to receive ISO 17025 accreditation.

ISO Accreditation Adds Assurance
Brad Rauch and Steve Kilts

The Quality Milk Production Services laboratory, Ithaca, N.Y., is the only milk quality and mastitis laboratory in North America to receive ISO 17025 accreditation.

Phil Smith, public affairs manager for the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation; Denise Archer, quality assurance director of Cornell’s Animal Health Diagnostic Center; Ruben Gonzalez, associate director and senior research veterinarian at QMPS; Ynte Schukken, QMPS program director and Peter Unger, president of A2LA display QMPS’ accreditation plaques.
ISO 17025: What does it mean?

ISO 17025 stands for International Standards Organization, and 17025 is the code for the standard for competency of testing laboratories. In general, ISO accreditation stands for “You say what you do and you do what you say.” Laboratories write down all their procedures in Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Work Area Procedures (WAPs). Then, the laboratory needs to show that it actually performs the procedures according to these SOPs and WAPs.

An important component of ISO 17025 is a competency evaluation of the laboratory. This means that the laboratory must show that it not only follows procedures, but also comes up with the correct result. External proficiency programs and statistical process control is used to evaluate the quality of the laboratory results.

QM2 is the newsletter of Dairy One and Quality Milk Production Services.

How to reach us...

Brad Rauch is Quality Manager at the QMPS lab in Ithaca, N.Y. Contact him via e-mail: bjr12@cornell.edu.

Steve Kilts is Quality Manager of DairyOne in Ithaca, N.Y. Contact him via e-mail: steve.kilts@dairyone.com.

QMPS is a program within the Animal Health Diagnostic Center, a partnership between the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell.

The QMPS staff of veterinarians, technicians and researchers works with New York dairies to improve milk quality by addressing high somatic cell counts, milking equipment and procedures, and milker training in English and Spanish. QMPS also conducts research and teaching programs.

Reach the four regional QMPS laboratories at:

Central Lab, Ithaca. 877-MILKLAB (877-645-5522)

Eastern Lab, Cobleskill. 877-645-5524

Northern Lab, Canton. 877-645-5523

Western Lab, Geneseo. 877-645-5525

QMPS website: http://qmps.vet.cornell.edu

Dairy One is an information technology cooperative, providing DHI records services and herd management software to dairies throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic region. A comprehensive laboratory network provides milk quality testing as well as forage, soil, manure and water testing.

Contact Dairy One Cooperative Inc. at 730 Warren Rd., Ithaca, N.Y. 14850. Tel: 800-344-2697. Email: dmr@dairyone.com

Website: www.dairyone.com

Pat Hooker (left), New York’s Commissioner of Agriculture, praised QMPS as one of the programs that help New York dairy producers “wring the last bit of profitability out” of their operations. He is shown with Ynte Schukken, program director for QMPS.

will be taken very seriously because we want to and because we are obliged to by our accrediting organizations.

Third, and even more important, is that the philosophy of a quality assurance system fits very well on a dairy farm. Just like in our laboratories, dairy farming is about performing routine tasks over and over, with some exceptional activities once in a while. Most processes on a farm may be defined in standard operating procedures or work-area procedures.

Just like in our organizations, operating a well-managed farm is all about “say what you do and do what you say.” And just like in our laboratories, dairy farms can collect information regarding to the competency of their operation. Somatic cell counts, bacteria counts and parameters like the new infection rate are excellent competency indicators. If we measure some breakdown in performance, we are always left with the question as to protocol compliance or some weakness in the plan itself.

Finally, issues that arise despite the protocols and procedures should be analyzed and the root cause can then be addressed in improved procedures or protocols.

Dairy farms are very suitable to operate under a strict quality assurance system: Quality Management, Quality Milk (QM2). Several dairy farms around the world operate now under the ISO accreditation system.

Why is quality assurance important to all of us?

QMPS and Dairy One have chosen to operate under strict quality assurance systems. We have done that to make our operations more organized, more standardized, and less haphazard. The same philosophy applies very well to every dairy farm. Quality management means being pro-active in developing operating procedures, follow the defined procedures and assure high quality of the food products coming from the farm.

Our organizations work with these systems every day and are therefore in the best possible position to work with dairy producers to help implement quality management on the farm. p