European food legislation is driven by consumer demands and has suggested the use of the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point concept (HACCP) for Quality Risk Management (QRM) programmes throughout the whole dairy food chain. In the near future, also on-farm HACCP-based programmes should be ready to assure food safety, animal health and ANIMAL WELFARE.

Bovine veterinarians are able to play a pivotal role in on-farm QRM-programmes, since they have knowledge about both on-farm risk assessment, and the relations between clinical pathology, NUTRITION, zootechnics and farm management. Farmers’ goals are often determined by foresights and farm conditions. Targets for different farm areas are set together with the farmer. Hazards and associated risk factors are identified and their negative influence on farm processes is controlled by farm-specific worksheets (protocols). Due to regular monitoring of farm data (performance indicators) and preset corrective and general preventive measures, one is able to keep farm-specific targets within its tolerance limits.

The HACCP concept offers a structural approach, easily adapted in (preventive) veterinary advisory programmes; assuring animal health & welfare, environmental protection, public health, food safety on the one hand, and a more efficient and more beneficial way of dairy farming on the other hand. In field trials in the Netherlands, Portugal and Austria, the HACCP-concept has been applied to combine both optimising farm management and formalisation of quality assurance.

Dairy producers need not only a curative veterinarian, but rather a veterinary specialist who is able to continuously conduct herd observations, interpret and communicate about farm events and advise in preventive QRM-programmes. Veterinarians should develop themselves in order to remain an essential advisory partner for the farmer, present added value to the farmer and to maintain their important position in the dairy food chain.