

GAP Notes from the Field, July, 2010

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I just had the opportunity to accompany the USDA auditor on our first six GAP audits in Carroll County. I am pleased to report that we had 100% pass rate for the six participants- 5 farms and 1 packing house. I learned a lot of additional information as I witnessed the process first hand. There were some items that I thought our growers might find beneficial as they prepared for their audits. It could help to gain some additional points that we were unaware of when we started.

I hope that these are some helpful hints for making sure that your audits are complete and successful.

Mock Recalls

When you select your lot number to trace in the mock recall, the farm side is relatively straight forward. However, when you account for where your product went, contact each buyer and ask for a letter to confirm that they have your product and either have moved it on or are holding it for your orders as to what to do with remaining inventory. Be sure to tell your buyer that this is a **MOCK** recall to practice your traceability. Also, it would be a good idea to maintain a list of buyers with phone numbers in your GAP Manual. All of your buyer's GAP certified growers are doing this so it will not be unusual when you ask for this letter. They will understand.

Visitor Logs

If you have the same visitors on a regular basis, they do not have to sign in every time they come to your farm. Only those visitors who are unknown to you when they arrive at your farm need to sign in. Also, when you write in your manual related to visitors, be careful if you state that "no" visitors are allowed into production areas. A better statement would be to say that only "approved" visitors are allowed into production areas. If you expect visitors to follow your sanitation procedures, which you should, please make sure that your sign says that visitors are expected to follow these procedures.

Pesticide License

In the case of packing houses, if you are the person responsible for adding chlorine to the washline water, then this is considered a chemical coming into contact with food products and you will need to have a private pesticide license. If you are using a special material for washing product, make sure that you have the MSDS and Label in your manual and that you are following directions for that product. (Example, Sanidate)

Worker Training

Worker training for sanitation and worker protection may be formal using the video materials and documented as we discussed. Keep in mind that training should be ongoing. If you see something that you want corrected whether it be sanitation, safety, or a procedure by your

workers, call a quick meeting and have them gather to hear your instructions. Once you have finished, be sure to document this (A piece of paper with subject, date, and initials will suffice.) Place this paper into your manual with your other training documents.

Monitoring fields for signs of wild or domestic animals

In the Farm Review, item 1-12, we are supposed to monitor fields for signs of wild or domestic animals. This is supposed to be done on a regular basis. Most of the time, when we are in the field for anything, we are looking for signs. We just fail to write these trips down and we don't want to add to more records. Suggestions, your response can say that you are monitoring every time that you are spraying your crops. If you see signs, a note is made in the margin of the spray recordbook which you are (or should be) already keeping. This note in the margin will suffice for a monitoring record.

Measures taken to reduce wild animals in production areas

We discussed the measure of requesting and using kill permits in certain states. Other states did not require them. Other measures that are acceptable include the following: trapping, baits and allowed hunting on home farm by family and friends.

Potable Water

We must have a source of potable water for drinking and handwashing by workers. Well water sources need to be tested annually. Several water tests for home wells came back with coliform present. We discussed that test results indicate a yes or no for presence of fecal coliforms. If the test comes back as a "yes", then it is not considered potable no matter what the colony count may be. In many cases, wells can become contaminated in the pipe and casing and not necessarily in the well itself. If you retest, or if you are testing for the first time, consider shocking the well by pouring chlorine bleach down the well head. Once in the system, wait 30 minutes then turn water on and let it run until the chlorine odor leaves the water. At this time, take your water sample making sure to protect the container from any possible contamination.

Well, just remember that we are all learning about food safety at the same time. GAP Certification consists of a living document in our Plan of Action Manuals and subject to change often. As I learn more, I hope to share anything that I gather with my growers and producers.

Questions? You can send me questions through my website.

<http://commhort.weebly.com/>