

# What is HACCP all about

HACCP or Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points is about food safety or producing a safe product for the consumer. It is not about looks or taste. The process involves determining where hazards might occur, which are called the critical control points, and then putting a strategy into place to prevent them from happening. It is therefore about prevention not cure.

## Why are supermarkets and the industry looking at HACCP?

Surely potatoes are a safe product. In general, that is so, but there are hazards which could cause the industry problems if we are not careful. Think of the food poisonings in recent years. Those industries involved also thought they had a safe product!

HACCP is very much about prevention and focuses on putting a system in place that reduces the risk of problems developing.

So let's look at some of the hazards that a potato grower may come across and how these may be prevented.

## Chemical hazards

In the potato industry this is the area of greatest risk.

<b>Hazard</b>	<b>Chemical contamination of potatoes in the grading shed from stored chemicals.</b>
<b>Solution</b>	Do not store chemicals in the grading shed.
<b>Hazard</b>	<b>Chemical contamination of potatoes when being transported.</b>
<b>Solution</b>	Do not have chemicals or fertilisers on the truck when transporting potatoes. Clean down trucks, if necessary, prior to transporting potatoes.
<b>Hazard</b>	<b>Chemical residues from spraying.</b>
<b>Solution</b>	Follow label recommendations on use of chemicals, regularly calibrate boomspray and keep simple records on chemical use as proof of what has been done.

## Physical hazards

<b>Hazard</b>	<b>Glass in with the potatoes from beer stubbies.</b>
<b>Solution</b>	Walk along the side of the paddock that abuts the main road and pick up the stubbies before harvesting.
<b>Hazard</b>	<b>Glass from shattering lights in potatoes.</b>
<b>Solution</b>	Have covers on lights that are over the grading equipment.

## Microbial hazards (bacteria, fungi)

Not a big problem with potatoes.

<b>Hazard</b>	<b>- Microbial problems due to faecal contamination from pests such as rats.</b>
<b>Solution</b>	- Implement a pest control program in sheds and cool rooms.

*(Besides, who wants to eat a potato that a rat has been munching on!)*

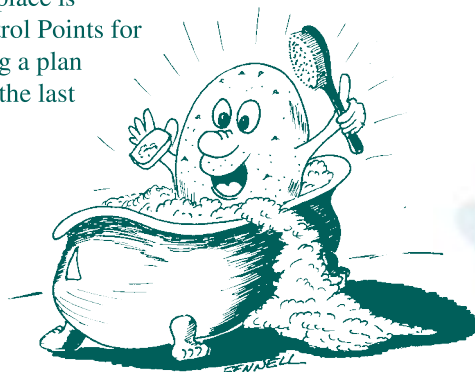
## Getting Started

The first stage of putting HACCP into place is identifying the hazards or Critical Control Points for your situation. The next stage is putting a plan into place to deal with the hazards and the last stage is carrying out the plan.

**Eric Coleman**

**Potato QA Project**

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# New blight strains hit USA, Europe

Particularly aggressive new strains of late blight, also known as Irish blight, (*Phytophthora infestans*) are spreading rapidly throughout the American continent and Europe.

Victorian plant pathologist, Dolf de Boer, had the opportunity to see this disease whilst on a recent study tour to Prince Edward Island, Scotland and the Netherlands.

Dolf said that he was alarmed because these strains are particularly aggressive and tend to spread through a crop more quickly than our current strains.

*“It occurs earlier in the season and can attack the main stems killing large parts of the plant quickly.”*

*“The new strains are more likely to attack the tubers and can then be spread by planting infected seed.”*

Dolf said that the other big problem with these new strains is that they are resistant to Ridomil®, the chemical currently used in Australia against our strain of late blight.

Dolf said that whilst the likelihood of these strains being introduced into Australia is currently low, we should be aware of its potential impact and be prepared.

The risks for us are that if these new strains do appear in Australia, then the disease will most likely become much more common in the traditional late blight areas such as in Victoria and Tasmania where it now only occurs sporadically. It can also potentially move into other production areas.

The disease will become more difficult and more costly to control and will affect seed production and certification.

Dolf says that if anyone notices that an outbreak of late blight is not responding to Ridomil, then they should contact their Department of Agriculture immediately.

**Dolf can be contacted on**

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