



# SCC DIAGNOSTICS TOOL BOX



## F-MP-2: Goal/Action Plan Selection Decision Matrix

Considerations for Appropriate Goal/Action Plan Selection		
Adapted from K. Nordlund, The Goal Form, Version 15: 7/28/98		
Considerations	Should the plan be implemented?	
	NO	YES
Potential return	Low	High
Cost to implement	High	Low
Interval to effect	Years	Weeks
Odds of success	Questionable	Certain
Impact of failure	Bankruptcy	Minimal

The selecting of GOALS and ACTION plans usually occurs simultaneously. There is a tendency to rank problems in order of highest dollar amount and create a goal based on the biggest item. This may be correct sometimes, but the area selected for change should be based upon several considerations, which are listed in the above table. Three examples may be useful in demonstrating this idea.

There may be indications of large losses in sub-clinical mastitis on a dairy. After some investigation, the problem appears to be due to environmental organisms and the plan would involve increasing the vacuum level to reduce liner slips and the initiation of a pre-dip program. Should the plan be implemented? The potential return is high, the cost to implement the program is minimal, the interval to effect would be weeks or days, the odds of success are good, and the impact of failure would be that things remain as they are now. All considerations say YES, the program should be implemented immediately.

Mastitis may also be indicated as a large dollar loss on a neighboring farm. However, after further investigation, it may be discovered that this second dairy has a high level of *Staph. aureus* infections and an inadequate milking system. Modernization of the milking system will cost \$25,000 and perhaps 25% of the herd should be culled. In reviewing the "considerations" (above table), the potential return may be also high as in the earlier example. However, the interval to effect may be months and the odds of success uncertain because of inconsistent milking practices, which suggests a "maybe". Notwithstanding, the cost to implement is very high and the added debt might make the farm vulnerable to bankruptcy if there is a precarious debt situation. These considerations would make this plan more risky. In this situation, advice to consider the decision carefully seems appropriate. Perhaps development of partial budgets to study the issue further, and obtain professional financial advice regarding farm debt management is needed before action is implemented. To accomplish milk quality success in this scenario, there will need to be a stronger commitment and more determined effort to succeed.

A third scenario addresses the dilemma of having to choose between multiple milk quality / mastitis problems. Considering financial and labor resource limitations as well as farm attitudes or preferences may also be important to achieving success. Since success often breeds success, it might be wise to select a less risky goal with smaller economic returns that can be realized quicker in order to gain the momentum needed to tackle the weightier problems. Whatever goals are selected, they should be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, rewarding, and timed) goals.

