

Biosecurity on the Beef and Dairy Operation

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The following is a list of suggested practices relating to biosecurity on the farm or ranch. Recent occurrences of infectious diseases in other countries and concerns of bioterrorism in this country make it important for ranch managers to have plans for minimizing risk in their operations.

The most important piece of advice concerning terrorism is to be alert. Be aware of who is visiting your ranch, what their activities are, and whether they might present any potential risk. In other words, know what is happening at your operation at all times.

Biosecurity has three major components: traffic control, isolation and sanitation. When effectively managed, these components go a long way toward ensuring a safe livestock production system.

Traffic control includes traffic onto your operation and traffic patterns within your operation. It is important to understand that traffic includes more than just people and vehicles. It also includes animals, such as dogs, cats, horses, wildlife, rodents and birds. Traffic control can be built into the facility's design. For example, place cattle loading facilities on the perimeter of the operation. Traffic control within the operation should be designed to stop or minimize contamination of cattle, feed, and all feed-handling and other equipment.

Isolation prevents contact between animals within a controlled environment. The most important step in disease control is minimizing commingling and movement of cattle. This includes all new purchases as well as commingling between established cattle groups. Even in operations that have high cattle turnover, such as feedlots, keeping feeding groups from mixing is an important biosecurity measure. Isolate sick cattle until you are certain they are no longer contagious.

Sanitation addresses the disinfection of materials, people and equipment that enter the operation and the cleanliness of the people and equipment on the operation. A main objective of sanitation should be to prevent contamination of cattle and equipment.

The following lists are important items to consider when evaluating or implementing a biosecurity system.

Concerning Animals:

- Keep a close watch on animals for signs of disease or other abnormalities.
- Develop a herd vaccination program in consultation with your veterinarian.
- Become knowledgeable of signs of important livestock diseases.
- Watch for and report any sudden, unexplained death losses.
- Report any severe illnesses affecting a high percentage of animals.
- Watch for blisters around animals' mouths, noses, teats or hooves.
- Watch for any central nervous system disorders, such as staggering and falling.
- Do not transport animals that show any signs of contagious disease.
- Consider having your veterinarian necropsy every dead animal, unless you are certain of the cause of death.

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- Dispose of dead animals properly, either by deep burial or burning. Protect carcasses from scavengers and pets.
- Minimize nonlivestock traffic, including dogs, cats, wildlife, rodents, birds and insects.
- Keep feed storage areas free of all animals. Fecal contamination of feeds can be an important source of disease transmission.

Concerning Purchased or Introduced Animals:

- Isolate new animals coming onto the farm for a period of time before introducing them into the regular herd. Discuss this need with your veterinarian.
- Do not introduce into the herd diseased cattle or healthy cattle that may be incubating disease.
- Do not introduce healthy cattle that have recovered from disease but may be carriers.

Concerning Visitors:

- Attempt to minimize the number of access routes to your operation. Consider locking gates or otherwise obstructing alternative entry sites.
- Keep a record of visitors, including dates. This could be useful for tracking purposes, if a disease outbreak occurs.
- Determine if visitors have been on other farms/ranches prior to visiting you.
- Minimize unnecessary visits.
- Consider using footbaths or plastic boot covers.
- Be especially careful if visitors have recently visited other countries.

Concerning Vehicles and Equipment:

- Specify designated parking places for visitors.
- Minimize vehicular traffic in livestock and feed areas.

- Be especially careful not to contaminate feedstuffs with manure.
- Clean and disinfect equipment used for manure removal or dead animal removal before using to handle feed.
- Consider where introduced equipment may have been prior to your farm.
- Evaluate the need for disinfecting introduced equipment.

Concerning Fairs and Shows:

- Do not exhibit animals that have clinical signs of any contagious disease.
- Have your animals checked by a veterinarian and obtain a health certificate (many shows require this) before the fair. This lessens the risk of spreading a disease to other animals.
- Do not share equipment among exhibitors, unless it is disinfected between uses. Ringworm and club lamb fungus are spread through contaminated clip-pers. Other diseases can be spread through shared use of feeding and watering equipment.
- When handling animals that are actively infected with ringworm or club lamb fungus, wear rubber gloves and wash with a detergent soap after handling.
- Change or wash clothing and shoes worn at the fair, before returning to work with other animals at home.
- Isolate animals that you take home for a minimum of 14 days before reintroducing them to your flock or herd. This allows for any signs of disease to appear, before the animal has a chance to infect other animals.
- Consider selling your market animals at the conclusion of the show, if that is an option and disease transmission is a concern.
- Support the requirement and enforcement of animal health regulations.

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