

Biosecurity Basics: Animal Movement

Biosecurity on the farm is an essential step to keeping your animals healthy and starts with a few key actions. This presentation will address biosecurity tips for the movement of animals onto or off of your farm or ranch.

Animals moving on and off your operation can introduce disease onto your farm or ranch. Biosecurity steps can help stop disease spread and protect your animals. Key areas to address include animal identification and record keeping, the management of incoming and returning animals, as well as planning the movement of animals during emergency situations. A printable PDF containing the tips presented here is available for free download on the CFSPH website.

All livestock need some form of identification to help with record keeping on their status, health and movements. Some livestock need individual identification; others can be identified as a group or lot. Animal identification options may include plastic, metal, or radiofrequency ear tags, collars, tattoos, brands, or leg bands. Follow state and federal identification requirements when moving animals.

Maintaining good records of your animals helps to monitor animal production and health, and can help to detect disease problems quickly. Animal records should include the animal's origin, age, health history, vaccination administration, and its current location. Request copies of vaccination and treatment records for all purchased animals. It is also important to document any animal movements and travel history in the event of a disease outbreak. Records can be electronic or on paper, whichever is easiest for you to maintain and keep current.

Animals brought onto your farm from outside sources are a greater risk to your herd than those born and raised on your farm. Incoming animals may not look sick but may be carrying disease.

To protect your herd or flock:

Purchase animals only from disease-free sources. New animals should come from sources whose biosecurity practices are similar to, or better than, your own.

Transport livestock in clean and disinfected trailers or crates

Test and vaccinate new animals before allowing them to enter your herd or flock.

Animals from out of state may need to be tested for diseases before movement. Follow all state and federal testing rules.

Vaccinate or confirm vaccination status of new animals for key disease for the species. Test and/or treat new animals for parasites.

All incoming animals should be kept in quarantine for a period of time, usually 21-30 days.

Work with your veterinarian to determine vaccination and testing needs and to set animal quarantine periods.

Know signs of illness to watch for and train any animal caretakers on how to recognize sick animals. Some examples of signs to look for include reduced feed intake, weight loss, decreased activity,

lameness, difficulty breathing, persistent coughing, eye or nasal discharge, diarrhea, depression, and abortion. If these signs are noticed, follow the diagnosis and treatment protocol you have developed with your herd/flock veterinarian or contact your veterinarian, extension or other animal health specialist with concerns.

For breeding animals,

Examine and test breeding animals based on guidance from your veterinarian.

Animals brought in for breeding should also be quarantined for a period of time.

Breeding equipment shared with other farms should be cleaned and disinfected before use.

Prevent unplanned mating with animals from other herds/flocks.

Livestock that have left your operation and returned should be quarantined for a period of time, usually 21-30 days. Limit, as much as possible, interactions between animals while at shows. Avoid sharing equipment with animals from other operations. Equipment such as feed or water containers, grooming equipment, leads, or halters can easily spread germs. Make sure that animal housing areas at shows have been cleaned and disinfected before allowing animals to enter.

Disasters can strike at any time. Emergency situations may require evacuation, or they may prevent the movement of animals or feed. Plan ahead. A written emergency plan can help decrease the impact and speed recovery. Include how you care for animals, move feed, personnel, and other needed items.

Using the following checklist, determine areas where you are doing well and others that need to improve.

Do you buy animals only from places with strict biosecurity programs?

Are new or returning animals separated from all other animals for a period of time before mixing them with your herd/flock?

Is separate feeding and watering equipment used for new or returning animals?

Do you have an emergency plan to care for your animals in the event of a natural disaster or other event that could stop animal and supply movement?

After answering, pick one or two "No" answers and make an improvement plan.

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