

# Cleaning and Disinfection on the Farm

## LAUNDRY



Soiled clothing can be a potential source of infection for both people and animals. Follow these tips to minimize disease risks from laundry on your operation.

### HOW IS LAUNDRY A DISEASE RISK TO ANIMALS AND PEOPLE?

Clothing worn around animals can be an important disease risk for people and animals. Any fabric item has this potential, including clothing such as coveralls, soiled jeans, or jackets, as well as cloths and towels used during birthing events or animal treatments.

Contamination of these items with birthing fluids, blood, urine, feces, or any other body fluids can spread disease to other animals, areas of the operation or even you and your family. Disease-causing bacteria, such as *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, and *Campylobacter* are a few examples.

This makes proper laundering efforts an important step in minimizing disease spread on your operation.

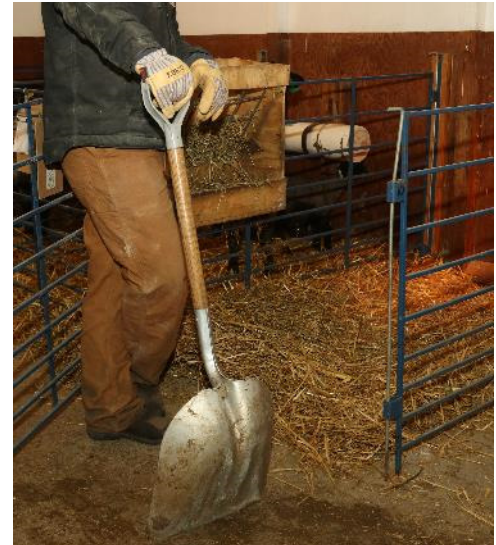


Photo from Renée Dewell, Iowa State University

### PREVENT CROSS CONTAMINATION

- **To animals on your operation**
  - Wear clean clothing when working around animals.
  - Change soiled clothing as soon as possible.
- **To those in your home**
  - Remove chore clothing before entering the home.
  - Wash your hands after handling soiled chore clothing.
- **To yourself**
  - Manure or animal body fluids on clothing or fabric items can transfer to your hands.
  - Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water after handling dirty laundry.
- **Keep chore and home clothing separate.**
  - Use separate containers or baskets for “farm clothing” and “home clothing”. Clean and disinfect baskets after each use.
  - Wash work clothes or fabrics separately from the regular laundry. Wash and dry soiled barn laundry last, after all home laundry is done.



Photo from Renée Dewell, Iowa State University

## WASHING LAUNDRY

Many disease-causing organisms are killed during the laundering process. The dilution with water, loosening by the detergent, agitation, and heat (both in the washing and drying processes) are quite effective against most disease-causing organisms.

- If possible, use a separate washer and dryer for items that have been worn around animals.
- If clothing or items are heavily soiled, loosen and remove as much debris or fecal matter as possible, before washing. Using a stiff brush can help with this step. This step should be done outside the home.
- If items are still soiled after brushing, soak them in water to loosen and remove additional material.
- When ready to launder, use a high-quality, deep-cleaning laundry detergent. Take care not to overfill the washer.
- Wash laundry using the hottest temperature permitted as stated on the item's fabric care label. Whenever possible, select a cycle with a water temperature that reaches at least 100°F, preferably at least 140°F. For reference, hot tap water is generally 120°F
- When possible, select washing options such as “pre-soak” and/or “stain removal”. If your washer has an extra rinse cycle option, it should be selected.
- Bleach or oxidizers may also be added to the wash cycle to help eliminate harder to kill organisms, such as cryptosporidium.
- When possible, hang laundry to dry in the sun. This can further eliminate pathogens. If a dryer is used, select the highest temperature setting permitted by the fabric care label.
- Clean and sanitize washer and dryer surfaces once you have washed and dried your farm clothing and items.



*Photos from Renée Dewell, Iowa State University*

**Acknowledgement:** Development of this material was made possible through support from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award number AWD-021794-00001 through the North Central Region SARE program under project number ENC19-176. USDA is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Iowa State University is an equal opportunity provider. For the full non-discrimination statement or accommodation inquiries, go to [www.extension.iastate.edu/diversity/ext](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/diversity/ext).