

## Stockowner biosecurity

### SUMMARY

The prevention of infectious disease being introduced to livestock farm herds and flocks is ever more important as margins tighten and exotic diseases threaten. Constant attention to detail and vigilance for signs of disease are vital for the protection of your own animals and your own business. Stockowners need to consider the disease risks when employing contractors, helping neighbours, attending livestock auctions, agricultural shows and visiting any facility where animals are kept. There are some guidelines which, if adhered to, can prevent unnecessary disease incursion with all the associated loss of income and hardships.

- **Minimise the risks of introducing disease to your stock, especially when you wish to maintain animals with a high health status.**
- **Preventing the introduction of disease will improve the viability and profitability of your enterprise.**
- **Assessing risks and adhering to the few simple points listed in this technical note can help you tackle this process.**
- **Improved biosecurity throughout the livestock industry will also reduce the overall disease presence in our country, reducing risk to individual farms and further improving the reputation of Scottish livestock producers and their products.**

### Introduction

The name given to the strategy for preventing the spread of infection is Biosecurity. Simple measures can be undertaken at a personal level to reduce the risks and thereby help improve the health, productivity and welfare of livestock.

There are many diseases in Britain that are easily spread by human contact with infected animals, for example Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD), Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR), Enzootic Abortion of Ewes, (EAE), Orf, Sheep Scab and Caseous Lymphadenitis (CLA). The agents responsible for these diseases can live for a period away from the animals on clothing and equipment. There are also some exotic notifiable diseases such as Brucellosis and Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) that can be all too easily spread by people working with infected animals.



Although cattle and sheep farmers are now more aware of the importance of biosecurity on their farms, they have been slower to embrace the approach than owners of poultry, pigs and fish. The concept of avoiding physical contact with animals not under their care is new to many but since the introduction of common infectious diseases is estimated to cost the agriculture industry millions of pounds annually through less efficient production, it is a concept worth adopting.



### Implementing Stockowner Biosecurity

A system of risk identification and risk management is at the heart of all Biosecurity. Farmers, with the help of their veterinary surgeons, should assess the risks of disease introduction associated with (1) contact with animals outwith their flocks and herds and (2) the use or sharing of equipment and transport with other stockowners. A list of action points to minimise the risks specific to their own farm can then be agreed; this will result in a biosecurity plan. A regular review of this risk assessment process and biosecurity planning is an important part of health planning as new problems and diseases are identified. The optimal control of disease introduction is achieved by minimising human-animal contact off the farm and avoiding the sharing of facilities, trailers and equipment used for animals where possible.



### General Measures – the Do's and Don'ts

The following lists of good and bad practice will give a basic biosecurity plan and will help with more specific risk assessments on a particular farm. Everyone has different requirements in the control of disease but aiming for the most secure systems is highly recommended.

#### DO's

Reduce contact with animals of unknown disease status to a minimum

Only visit livestock on other farms when essential  
When attending livestock auctions and shows keep a distance from animals and only make contact when it is vitally necessary remembering to change clothing when home again

Keep separate clothing and footwear, preferably waterproof in style, for working with livestock on other farms, markets or shows and remove this before attending your own stock

Wash all protective clothing and footwear before leaving your farm and other farms or facilities

When visiting other farms and markets wash vehicles if contaminated before returning home

Limit farm access to only those people deemed essential and provide a contact point or telephone number at road end for callers without an appointment

Ensure contractors and others for example neighbours, shearers, scanners auctioneers, foot trimmers have clean clothing and most importantly equipment when attending your stock

Have dedicated equipment for your farm to avoid use of contractor's where possible

Supply disposable overalls and disposable foot covers for occasional visitors

Limit and control access of vehicles to the farm particularly those used for moving animals

Have delivery and pick up points at a site isolated from farm stock

Clearly identify preferred access and transit points and paths for ramblers to minimise random access where possible

Clearly identify quarantine or separation facilities or other sensitive areas where you would prefer the public not to enter and provide an alternative route.

Be aware that any visit to another farm, market or gathering can create a risk for your farm.

#### DON'TS

Make contact with unknown disease status livestock unless essential

Assume other farms you visit are free from disease.

Share animal transporters unless unavoidable

Use animal transporters unless thoroughly washed out after previous use

Share veterinary equipment such as foot knives, syringes and vaccinators

Use or share other people's livestock handling facilities

Wear same outer clothing on your farm and others

## Facilities for Prevention of Disease Spread

There are some basic facilities that should be available on all farms and at livestock markets and shows:

Properly maintained disinfectant footbath at the entrance

Wash up area for people leaving the site to clean hands, protective clothing and footwear .

Hardstanding with drainage where livestock trailers can be thoroughly washed down after use

All farms should also have a quarantine facility identified to separate new or ill animals from the rest of the herd or flock until proven disease free.

Special attention should be paid to the washing of trailers following moving animals on to your farm and into the quarantine facility. It is also advisable that shared trailers are washed down on return even if the person borrowing has cleaned them. A properly maintained power washer is recommended since it can be used for visiting vehicles as well as your own. Ensure that livestock can not come in contact with the effluent.

All footbaths must be kept as clean as possible for the disinfectant to work efficiently and should be changed regularly. Provision of a stiff brush or water bath next to the footbath may help prolong effectiveness.



Figure 4 permanent cleansing and disinfection point



## Authors:

Sandy Clark (deceased)

C Mason

SAC

Dumfries Veterinary Centre

Consultancy Services Division

St. Marys Industrial Estate, Dumfries, DG1 1DX

T: 01387 267260

F: 01387 250028

E: [colin.mason@sac.co.uk](mailto:colin.mason@sac.co.uk)