



## Biosecurity for Livestock Exhibitors

Dan Grooms, D.V.M., Michigan State University, College of Veterinary Medicine  
Ken Geuns, Michigan State University, Department of Animal Science

**L**ivestock exhibitions are an important part of agriculture in the United States. They provide an opportunity for youth to participate in an activity focused on agriculture and the livestock industry. Livestock exhibitions are also an important marketing tool for seedstock producers, providing an opportunity to showcase their animals and to evaluate breeding programs by directly comparing their animals with others.

Unfortunately, livestock exhibitions are a potential threat to the health of individual animals, the herds from which they originate and the industry they represent.



Exhibitions create an environment that results in the intermingling of animals that are of different species, breed, age and sex and come from many different

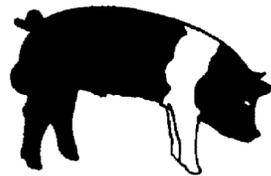
locations and management backgrounds. Travel, close confinement in unfamiliar settings and other stressors can lead to increased disease susceptibility. Stress can also cause animals that may be carriers of disease pathogens to shed these organisms in high quantities. In addition, exhibitions allow people from a wide variety of backgrounds and interests to have close contact with animals. All of these factors put exhibit animals at high risk of becoming exposed to disease pathogens and becoming sick and spreading the disease. Biosecurity precautions can be taken to reduce this risk to exhibit animals.

### What is Biosecurity?

Biosecurity can be defined as those practices designed to prevent the introduction of a harmful agent into a defined setting. In livestock operations, this means preventing harmful agents such as viruses, bacteria, parasites or toxins from coming in contact with livestock. Biosecurity measures can be implemented on a national, state or herd level. Responsibility for herd-level biosecurity usu-

ally rests with the herd owner. To be successful, a biosecurity plan must address factors important in overall animal health (vaccinations, nutrition, ventilation), how traffic (movement of people, animals and equipment) will be regulated, and how cleaning and disinfection procedures will be used to reduce pathogen levels.

### Biosecurity for Livestock Exhibitors



The following biosecurity guidelines can be used to reduce the risk of exhibition animals becoming sick and spreading diseases.

#### *Before taking animals to an exhibit:*

- Make sure that animal exhibitions adhere to the following guidelines to reduce the risk of disease spread from animal to animal at the event site:
  - Provide clean and properly disinfected animal housing facilities with adequate room and ventilation.
  - Provide access to fresh water.
  - Require veterinary examinations of all animals participating in the event to ensure that only healthy animals are exhibited.
  - Enforce all local, state and national animal exhibition regulations.
- Work with your veterinarian to establish a herd health program. Ensure that the home herd is well vaccinated before any animal attends shows or fairs.
- Do not bring any visibly sick or unthrifty animals to a fair or show.

- Complete all tests and procedures required by a show, county or state fair regulations, including disease screening, vaccinations and physical examinations. Have available the appropriate paperwork documenting that these activities have been completed.

- Minimize stress prior to the fair by providing a clean, dry and comfortable environment, plenty of water and the same feeds that will be taken to the fair.

- Transport animals to fairs and shows in clean trailers. Do not transport other exhibitors' animals in the same trailer. If possible, avoid the use of commercial trailers.

#### *During the fair:*

- Keep your animals as comfortable as you can to help reduce stress. Provide adequate bedding and plenty of air movement (fans).

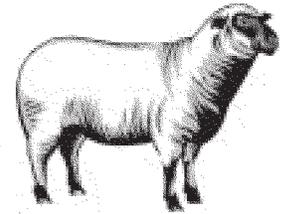


- Make sure clean water is always available and that the animals get the same feed as they eat at home.

- Minimize nose-to-nose contact with animals from other farms. Avoid contact with manure from other animals.

- Keep wheelbarrow tires, pitchforks and feeding equipment clean and free of manure.
- Avoid sharing grooming equipment and feed and water containers. If you loan equipment to someone, clean and disinfect it when it is returned.
- For milking animals it is best to bring a portable milking machine from your farm. Avoid sharing milking units.

- Discourage fair visitors from petting or feeding your animals. Post signs asking visitors not to touch or feed the animals.



- Practice good personal hygiene.

#### *After the fair:*

- Upon return, house show animals in a facility separate from the rest of the herd for 3 to 4 weeks. Ideally, this would be in a completely separate place to avoid contact or airborne transmission of disease. If this is not possible, it should be a separate pen in a different building or at least a separate corner of the barn. Work routine should be modified so that returning animals are attended to last.

- Clean and disinfect all of your equipment before it is used again at home.

- Minimize stress by making sure animals are comfortable, well fed and watered. This will give them the best chance to fight off any infection picked up at the fair.

- Monitor animals for signs of disease, such as fever, diarrhea, skin abnormalities, heel warts, mastitis or abortions. Most diseases are more easily treated if caught early. Call your veterinarian at the first sign that your animal may be sick.

Exhibiting livestock can be an enjoyable and educational experience. Following a few simple guidelines to help keep your livestock healthy during the show season can pay big dividends.

For more information on biosecurity, go to <http://cvm.msu.edu/extension>.