

BIOSECURITY: PROTECTING POULTRY FARMS DURING AGRICULTURE INSPECTIONS

Recent AI outbreaks in the United States make the disease threat much closer to the East Coast. Biosecurity is the greatest way to ensure farms and poultry are safeguarded against disease and any others which threaten animal health.

Practicing biosecurity means you are doing everything to reduce the chances of infectious disease being carried onto farms by people, animals, equipment or vehicles. This also means you are being diligent to reduce the chance of disease leaving a farm. Healthy flocks contribute to the health of U.S. animal agriculture as a whole.



An important first step for agriculture inspectors or other personnel is to identify the greatest risks for introducing disease to a farm during an inspection.

Greatest Risks:

1. Farm visitors pose a risk, especially if they have been on other farms with poultry or have recently been in other countries with diseases exotic to the United States.
2. Farm equipment that has been in contact with manure can be a source of infection. Equipment should not be shared with other farms unless it has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before it reaches the next property.
3. On the farm, one of the greatest risks comes from introducing new animals onto the premise, commingling or exposing the existing flock to other animals. Encourage owners, as a rule of thumb, to segregate new animals from the existing flock for 30 days.

Common Sense Biosecurity Measures You Can Follow:

Protect poultry flocks with basic tips to prevent animal disease outbreaks:

1. **Keep Your Distance** – Park off of the farm and walk in if possible. Obey Restricted Access signs onto the property; enter by “Visitor Entrance” where applicable. Do not go near poultry unless absolutely necessary, and then wear clean footwear (disposable boots work well) and clothes (supply for them). An area should be available for visitors to change clothes and provide shower-in, shower-out facilities if possible
2. **Keep It Clean** - Follow biosecurity procedures for cleanliness. Wear clean clothes, scrub boots/shoes with disinfectant and wash hands thoroughly with soap. Bleach mixed with water (4 oz bleach per gallon of water) is an adequate, inexpensive disinfectant for boots and equipment . Equipment and vehicles should be clean before entering property.
3. **Don't Haul Disease Off the Farm** - If you have been on other poultry farms, or other places where there is livestock and/or poultry, *and you have to drive onto the farm*, clean and disinfect your vehicle tires and equipment before entering another farm or returning home. Keep a small sprayer with disinfectant (bleach mixture or equivalent) in your car or truck along with a bucket and scrub brush. If you were near the poultry during the visit outside of the vehicle, always change clothes and wash hands after visiting a flock.
4. **Don't Spread Disease With Equipment** - **Do Not** use equipment, tools, or other supplies without cleaning and disinfecting it between farms.

Look for Signs of Disease

It is important for producers to know the warning signs of diseases such as avian influenza (AI), and you can keep an eye out also. If you know the signs, you may be able to tell if something is wrong. Early detection helps prevent the spread of disease. Look for these signs:

1. Sudden increase in bird deaths in the flock
 2. Sneezing, gasping for air, coughing, and/or runny nose
 3. Watery and green diarrhea
 4. Lack of energy and poor appetite
 5. Drop in egg production or soft or thin-shelled, misshapen eggs
 6. Swelling around the eyes, neck, and head
 7. Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs and legs
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5. **Report Sick Animals** - Don't wait. Report serious or unusual animal health problems to MDA Animal Health at 410-841-5810. Animal Health inspectors will follow-up by calling the owner and visiting the farm.

(Source: USDA APHIS website)