

Biosecurity: Protecting Your Health and the Health of Your Animals

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Animal exhibitors at fairs need to understand what measures prevent the spread of disease among animals and people.

What is the concern?

Because fairs and shows are such an enjoyable activity for many people, it is important to keep these events open and accessible to both exhibitors and the public. However, it is equally important that exhibitors understand what measures need to be taken to prevent the spread of disease, and how everyone plays an important role in preventing the spread of disease among animals and people.

In 2001, outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease in the United Kingdom (UK) and pseudorabies in Nebraska resulted in costly consequences for both economies and reminded us of the negative effect of some livestock diseases. Some diseases, such as foot-and-mouth disease and pseudorabies, cannot cause disease in humans. Even though these diseases do not present any direct risks to humans, human contact and attendance at fairs can spread these diseases to other livestock herds. Livestock disease outbreaks can be economically devastating to your family, your community and the state, which derives a large portion of its income from the livestock industry. In addition, there are a number of animal diseases such as soremouth, club lamb fungus, salmonellosis and *E. coli* O157:H7, which may make people sick. Some simple precautions to take before, during and after fairs are listed below.

For Preventing Spread of Diseases among Animals

- Do not exhibit animals that have clinical signs of any contagious disease.
- If you have animals in your herd with a contagious disease such as soremouth or club lamb fungus make sure you wear rubber gloves when handling these animals and wash your hands and gloves with a detergent soap afterward. Leave any unhealthy animals at home.

- Have your veterinarian issue a health certificate (Certificate of Veterinary Inspection) before the fair (most shows require this). This lessens the risk of spreading a disease to another exhibitor's animals.
- Do not share equipment among exhibitors unless it is disinfected between uses. Ringworm and club lamb fungus are rapidly spread through contaminated clippers. Other diseases can be spread through shared use of feeding and watering equipment.
- Change or wash clothing and shoes worn at the fair before returning to work with other animals at home.
- Isolate animals that you take home for a minimum of 14 days before reintroducing them to your flock or herd. This will allow for any signs of disease to appear.
- Many shows for market animals have the option of selling the animal for harvest at the conclusion of the show. Seriously consider this option when disease transmission is a concern.
- Support the requirement and enforcement of animal health regulations.

For Preventing the Spread of Diseases to People

- Discourage visitors from touching or petting animals, except at designated animal petting areas.
- If visitors do touch animals, encourage them to wash their hands with water and soap afterward.
- Wash your hands with water and soap after direct contact with animals, particularly before eating.
- Avoid eating in animal exhibit areas.

This publication has been peer reviewed.

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**Index: Animal Diseases
General Livestock**
Issued January 2007

Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

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