

Biosecurity for Beef Production in Alabama

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Biosecurity is an important part of animal production, regardless of facilities, size, and type of production. Cattle in a closed group will develop immunity to strains of organisms in the group. If the herd is isolated from other cattle, there will be little immunity to different organisms or strains. More important to the Alabama beef industry is the threat of catastrophic loss because of a disease outbreak, either domestic or foreign. Beef producers should be aware of potential threats and the procedures to keep these threats off the farm. A biosecurity plan will prevent or reduce exposure to organisms or strains of organisms not present on a farm and the potential catastrophic losses that can follow exposure.

Biosecurity in its simplest form is complete isolation from all forms of exposure. Although some have tried, it is rarely if ever practical. An effective biosecurity plan will provide steps for determining the health status of your herd, minimizing contact with an outside organism by controlling contact with other cattle and humans, and keeping your herd healthy, making them less susceptible to disease.

To determine the health status of your herd, you must have a veterinary-client-patient relationship. Your veterinarian must be familiar with your farm and your cattle. He or she can use this knowledge to develop a testing program for diseases critical to your specific farm. Without this, an effective biosecurity plan is not possible.

Controlling contact with other cattle is difficult in a pasture-based production system. Providing a buffer between adjoining herds will help. Selecting

replacements from herds with a comparable health program and disease status will reduce the chances of a disease outbreak. Isolating new purchases and testing for diseases important to your plan provides another layer of protection.

There are cases where you may have visitors at your farm. If there is no alternative to an actual site visit, following these steps should minimize any negative impact your visitors may have on the health of your animals.

- 1) Before the visit, the visitors should be made aware of the biosecurity considerations for your farm.
- 2) All visitors should be dressed appropriately. Provide clothing, such as coveralls and boots, or make sure visitors wear clothing free from contact with other cattle.
- 3) All visitors should follow the flow pattern you set for your farm.

You are another potential source of contamination. If you are around other cattle, especially commingled cattle (those at sale barns, fairs, and shows), change clothes and shower before coming in contact with your cattle. Clean and disinfect your truck and trailer after hauling cattle. Anyone hauling cattle for you should do the same.

Following these simple steps will help you meet your goals while minimizing the impact of visitors on the health of your animals. This information should help you see the need for a biosecurity plan. To start on your own biosecurity plan, contact your veterinarian.