

Safeguarding the VCPR

Clarke Communication and Consulting

Veterinarians and food animal owners have been practicing disease prevention and containment since the beginning of their professional association. Biosecurity has always been a part of herd health programs and a part of the interaction between veterinarian and food animal owner to achieve and maintain optimal animal health and production. As much as the veterinarian is essential to the safety and quality of animals and animal products, biosecurity becomes the rallying cry and practice management tool of food animal systems. Clients expect it. Good veterinary client patient relationships demand it.

Biosecurity is the management practice activities that reduce the opportunities for infectious agents to gain access to, or spread within, a food animal production unit. As the public's concern for food safety continues to be directed toward the producer, a well-defined and well-documented biosecurity plan will be a significant factor in ensuring that animal products are safe, wholesome, and acceptable. Veterinarians are the initial control point for biosecurity and therefore are expected by their clientele and the general public to assist in establishing, defining, refining, and practicing biosecurity programs.¹

On paper it's relatively simple: identify all animals; reduce exposure to disease; protect against infection; manage people; and verify all activities through records and animal identification. At one extreme is the modern swine or poultry operation with all the characteristics of a penal facility, from chain-link fence to guard houses that monitor and control the movement of all personnel, materials, and animals. At the other end of the scale are ranches on large tracts of land, feedlots, dairy farms and small backyard operations. All can install workable biosecurity programs.

It is important to remember that disease is the gatecrasher of many good things in agriculture. You can't un-ring a bell!

¹ J.J.England, "Biosecurity: safeguarding your veterinarian:client:patient relationship," *Vet Clin Food Anim*18, (2002):373-378