



INFORMATION BULLETIN

EPA BIOSECURITY PROCEDURE FOR LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY FARMS

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INTRODUCTION

Farming communities are becoming increasingly aware of the potential risk that visitors pose of bringing disease onto their properties. Overseas and local experience of foot-and-mouth disease, Johnes disease and Newcastle disease demonstrate the devastating impact disease can have on an industry.

EPA officers have a role to ensure that we do not become a vector of disease when visiting farms. Officers should not only take precautions against the spread of diseases, but they should be seen to do so.

This procedure establishes the routine actions EPA staff need to undertake to minimise the risk of transmitting animal diseases from livestock or poultry farms. The procedure includes biosecurity measures for general farms, as well as industry-specific considerations for piggeries, feedlots, poultry sites (broilers, breeders and hatcheries, egg farms and pullet farms) and dairies.

Individual farms or companies may have adopted site-specific biosecurity requirements that go beyond what is prescribed in this procedure. In these circumstances, EPA staff should attempt to abide by those requirements. Where issues remain, EPA staff should discuss with the farm operator the measures in this procedure prior to entering a farm.

Adhering to these procedures will minimise the risk of disease being spread by EPA staff and ensure public confidence in our efforts to protect the biosecurity of Victorian animal industries.

All EPA staff entering farms must implement the requirements of this procedure.

BIOSECURITY

Effective biosecurity procedures are practical measures to limit the spread of infectious diseases and pests, both within a farm and from one farm to another. They are essential in preventing and controlling the spread of important exotic and endemic diseases.

Diseases can be brought onto farms in a number of ways. Although diseases are most commonly introduced into herds or flocks by the addition of animals, there is a risk of disease introduction by people travelling between groups of animals. Disease

can be transmitted through equipment, soil, mud or clothing and on the body. The risk of disease transfer will vary and is influenced by the specific disease agent, extent of animal contact, the time lapsed since the last animal contact and the preventative measures taken.

Separate emergency procedures will be applicable in cases of actual outbreaks of diseases. In this case EPA staff will probably not be required (or will be prohibited) to enter an affected area.

This biosecurity procedure does not address occupational health and safety (OH&S) requirements for farm entry. EPA staff must refer to the relevant job safety analysis (JSA) prior to visiting any agricultural facility and should refer to the Safety Care intranet site for any other OH&S information, such as vaccination requirements. Staff may also need to comply with site-specific OH&S requirements. This may be in the form of a visitor induction or similar procedure.

BIOSECURITY PROCEDURE

1. General procedure

EPA staff should follow these actions before entering any farm.

Prior to entering a farm

- Determine any industry curfew (time between farm visits, as required by the industry – see section 2).
- Ensure you arrive with clean clothing and footwear (not covered in mud or manure).
- Ensure your vehicle is not covered in mud and manure.
- If possible, contact the owner either prior to or at the commencement of the visit to discuss site-specific biosecurity requirements.

On farm

- Observe signage on the farm. If the facility is gated, contact the owner using details usually found at the entrance.
- Go directly to the office and avoid restricted areas. Car parking is usually provided away from sheds or paddocks.

- Always observe industry or site-specific biosecurity requirements (for example, walking through virucidal agent or wearing protective clothing).
- EPA staff should only enter animal production areas or buildings when essential and following discussion with the operator. You should avoid contact with animals. Discuss with the operator the areas you need to visit on the farm. If you do not need to go near sheds or animals you may not need to undertake any biosecurity requirements.
- Acknowledge any other intensive animal facilities visited within the last few days and pets at home. This may influence biosecurity requirements.
- If possible do not drive your EPA vehicle unnecessarily around the farm. Consider using a vehicle supplied by the facility for on-site travel.

Leaving the farm

- Where on-site protective clothing has been supplied, dispose of on site as directed.
- If wearing your own shoes, remove as much mud and effluent as possible prior to leaving the farm.
- Wash hands, if possible.

If a farmer refuses to allow an EPA officer onto a farm because of biosecurity reasons

Prior to entry onto a farm, an EPA officer must follow the guidance in this procedure and acknowledge any site-specific biosecurity conditions.

An authorised officer has right of entry (under section 55 (1) of the Environment Protection Act) at any reasonable time to premises from or on which waste or a pollutant is or is likely to be discharged. Although a farmer cannot legally deny entry to commercial farming premises on the grounds of biosecurity, an authorised officer is expected to use his or her judgement and reconsider the need to access the site immediately or the need for access to restricted areas of the farm.

If you are being refused entry or the conditions seem unreasonable, leave the premises and seek further instruction from your team leader or manager.

If required, inform a farmer that EPA has a biosecurity procedure that has had input from industry and ensure that you demonstrate the best practices highlighted in this procedure.

2. Industry-specific requirements and information

Apart from the general biosecurity procedures mentioned above, industries or sites may have specific biosecurity requirements.

Site-specific requirement must be observed. The following information is provided to inform staff of what may be required when visiting a farm. You must discuss individual requirements, if possible, prior to

entering the site or immediately upon entry, as they may vary from those mentioned below.

Inform the operator of any farms, animals or animal-related facilities (such as abattoirs) you have visited or come in contact with over the past few days. Some farms may still allow entry even though you don't meet all the industry-specific requirements (such as a curfew).

2a Poultry (including eggs)

- All staff visiting poultry farms must declare if they have visited any overseas countries within the last week. This is in relation to preventing the introduction of avian influenza (particularly H5N1 strain) to Australia.
- On most poultry farms a visitor book and quarantine declaration must be signed before entering the site.

Broiler farms

- Staff should contact the owner prior to entering any restricted area. This usually includes the areas in and around the sheds. Never enter a shed without permission from the operator.
- Follow the biosecurity requirements as specified by the owner, which may include: walking through a virucidal agent (footbath) and wearing protective clothing (provided by operator).
- EPA staff should not visit more than one poultry farm in a day. Forty-eight hours or longer between visits is preferred. Inform the operator of the farm if you have visited any other poultry farm within the last couple of days.
- Staff should not enter a poultry farm for 48 hours if they have visited a property or been in contact with someone who has other avian species (such as budgerigars or canaries) or pigs.
- Staff who keep avian species or pigs should not enter the production facility of a poultry farm.

Breeder farms

- As per broiler farm requirements above, plus the following.
- Visitors to a breeder farm are required to shower prior to entering the site. All items required for showering are to be provided by the company.
- Staff must not visit two breeder farms on the same day.
- Mobile phones may not be permitted on some breeder farms.

Hatcheries

- As per the breeder farm requirements above.

- Inform the operator of the farm if you have visited any other poultry farm within the last couple of days

Egg and pullet farms

- Staff should not visit a farm if they have been in contact with other poultry within the last 24 hours. Inform the operator if you have visited any other poultry farm recently. If access is allowed within the 24-hour time frame you may be required to sanitise vehicles prior to entry and be provided with protective clothing.
- Protective clothing may be required on some farms and you may be required to walk through a virucidal agent (footbath) prior to entering sheds.
- Vehicles may be restricted to certain areas of the farm (for example, not near sheds). Observe signage.

2B Pigs

- Staff entering a quarantine area may have to be approved by the site manager via a visitor authorisation form or visitor book.
- Staff may be required to wear protective clothing and footwear as supplied by the operator. Observe 'clean' and 'dirty' areas.
- Staff will usually be required to walk through a virucidal agent prior to entering sheds.
- Some piggeries require a pig-free period of 12–48 hours prior to the visit. Inform the operator of any recent visits. (Some farms still allow visits within these times but may require you to shower prior to entry.)
- Do not visit a piggery if you have visited an abattoir within the last 72 hours.
- EPA staff should not visit a piggery if they keep pigs.
- Showering may be required for herds with a high health status.

2C Cattle and sheep feedlots

- Feedlots may be located in isolated areas and may not have anyone in attendance. In this instance staff should endeavour to contact the owner via the details usually provided by signage on the gate prior to entering the premises. This is beneficial not only for biosecurity but also OH&S.
- Staff will be required to fill in a visitor log that may include a biosecurity risk assessment. The assessment considers the visitor's disease exposure potential and subsequent risk to the farm (such as visits to other feedlots and overseas travel).
- Ensure vehicle movements are within designated areas. Observe signage. If possible, do not drive an

EPA vehicle unnecessarily around the farm. Consider using a vehicle supplied by the facility for on-site travel

2C Dairies

- Refer to general farm procedure.