



Dairy Biosecurity: Healthy Farms





Farm Business Risk

Dairy farmers are continually identifying and managing risks in order to run good businesses that produce quality products while caring for their people, animals, land and the wider environment. Risk is part of everything we do, whether it be driving a vehicle, managing fodder supplies, purchasing new equipment or making investments, and risk management should be seen as a normal part of farm management.

Dairy farmers are very aware of risks that can reduce the profitability of their enterprise, and are especially vigilant in recognising any event that could reduce the quality of their milk. However some other risks which affect the value of their assets and the ongoing viability of the enterprise can slip through the cracks if the process is not managed systematically. A structured risk management approach results in fewer surprises, improves planning and performance and helps farmers to identify opportunities for continuous improvement through innovation.

Financial benefits flow from better targeting of resources, protection of assets and avoidance of costly mistakes. Areas of farm management that warrant a structured risk management approach include:

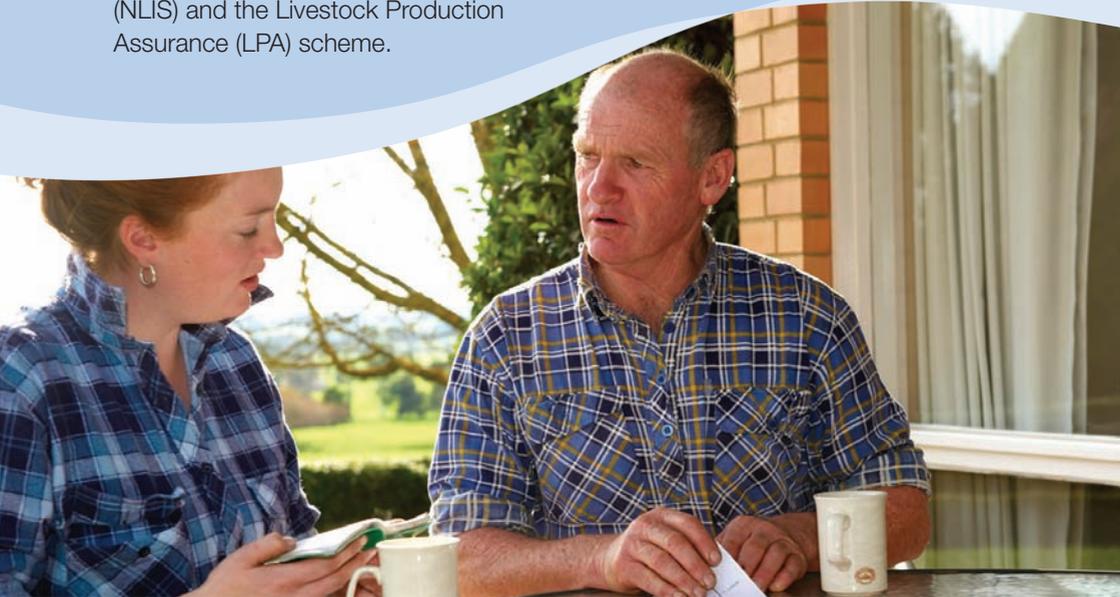
- Food safety
- Biosecurity (animal diseases, weeds and pests)
- Occupational health and safety
- Animal welfare
- Environmental issues

The aim of this brochure is to provide farmers with a check list of farm practices that contribute to managing the risks associated with biosecurity. It will also assist farmers to systematically assess their procedures to ensure that no important risks are being overlooked, and provide practical guidance on how to manage these risks, as part of normal farm practices.

Biosecurity

Biosecurity is the process of farmers reducing risks to their business by limiting the likelihood of introducing and spreading animal diseases, weeds and pests. While the biosecurity outcomes are consistent for different industries it is recognised that all properties are different and the key person for assessing and managing risks on each farm is the farm manager.

Australian dairy farmers already have many of the elements of biosecurity in place as part of these normal operations supported by quality assurance programs, the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) and the Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) scheme.





Stock movements

Animal diseases can be introduced in purchased animals and those that have been off the farm for example on agistment, cow parking and at shows.

The key activities are aimed at **PREVENTING** disease agents, weeds and pests getting on to your farm.

The risks of introducing disease can be reduced by:

- carefully assessing the disease status of the originating property
- inspecting animals prior to introduction
- segregating and observing introduced animals before allowing contact with other animals
- only purchasing semen and embryos from reputable sources
- checking National Vendor Declarations and ensuring that animal movements are notified to NLIS
- limiting contact with wildlife, vermin and feral animals.



Herd health

Minimising the occurrence and spread of animal diseases is achieved by having a preventive herd health program and frequent observation of animals to ensure early detection of illness and prompt treatment.

The key activities are aimed at **MANAGING** your livestock in a way that prevents the occurrence of disease and limits spread if animals do become ill.

Key elements of a herd health program include:

- vaccinating to prevent diseases that occur in the region
- careful observation at milking
- comprehensive mastitis prevention treatments
- working with neighbours to minimise spread of diseases and weeds from adjoining properties
- reporting unusual outbreaks of disease to a veterinarian
- having a plan for prompt disposal of dead stock.



Farm inputs

Introduced products such as stock feed, bedding materials, water, road and track materials and fertilizers (especially unconventional products) have the potential to bring in disease agents and weed seeds.

The key activities are aimed at **MONITORING** farm inputs to ensure that they do not contain animal disease agents, weed seeds or pests.

These risks can be minimised by:

- purchasing stock feeds from reputable suppliers who can provide commodity vendor declarations as specified in quality assurance manuals
- ensuring that stock feeds are free of animal products
- limiting access to water courses
- observing withholding times for introduced products such as poultry shed effluent and animal manure fertilizers
- checking sources of farm inputs prior to purchase if they are considered to pose risks.



Visitors

People and vehicles both have the potential to introduce weed seeds and infectious disease agents. Different categories of visitors, contractors and service personnel pose different levels of risk and farmers need to have strategies to manage those that pose the greatest risks.

The key activities are aimed at **CONTROLLING** who comes on to the farm and taking steps to manage visitors that pose the greatest risks.

These steps might include:

- limiting unnecessary movements over the farm
- having restricted areas of access for farm contractors and transport operators
- providing facilities for farm contractors and visitors to clean boots and equipment
- taking care to minimise risks of you spreading disease agents when visiting other properties, saleyards or other places that have animals of unknown disease status.



Effluent and waste

Effluent and waste materials have the potential to spread disease on the property of origin or to neighbours.

The key activities are aimed at **CONTAINING** effluent and farm waste materials in a way that prevents spread of disease agents.

These risks can be reduced by such things as:

- Having an effluent use plan that includes controls to prevent the potential spread of disease
- Having a disposal plan for potentially contaminated waste materials such as bedding, used syringes and dumped milk
- Capturing, containing and disposing of effluent from the dairy and yards within the boundaries of the farm
- Fencing effluent storage areas to prevent access by people and livestock



Neighbours

Neighbours can be a source of animal diseases and weeds. Every farm has different relationships with neighbours and farmers need to assess risks posed by animal movement through fences, contact over fences and from disease agents and weed seeds washing across fence lines.

The key activities are aimed at **PROTECTING** your farm from animal disease risks, weeds and pests that may be present on adjoining properties.

The risks can be reduced by such things as:

- Securing boundaries by fences or geographical features to prevent uncontrolled movement of livestock on and off the property
- Maintaining contact with neighbours
- Inspecting and maintaining boundaries to ensure they remain secure
- Working with neighbours to limit the spread or impact of diseases, weeds and pests.



Dead Animals

Dead animals can be a source of infection for other animals especially if they have died from an infectious disease. They also have the potential to cause offence to neighbours and to cause environmental damage.

The key activities involve **SEGREGATING** dead animals and organising disposal in a way that minimises adverse effects.

Steps to reduced the risks associated with dead animals might include:

- Having a Disposal Plan for dead stock
- Engaging a veterinarian to investigate unusual outbreaks of disease in order to rule out exotic disease and reduce the potential to compromise the Biosecurity of the farm
- Having disposal areas that are secured and contained to prevent access by livestock, feral animals and wildlife
- Sitting disposal areas in locations that prevent nuisance to neighbours and spread of contaminants into waterways or the environment.



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