

Beeftalk 770: Biosecurity Confessions

I must confess some consternation with this expectation of restrictions such as protective boots and clothing and bottles of disinfectant.

The process is challenging, but events in life tend to cause us to make corrections. Most of the corrections are minor adjustments, but nevertheless, we fix.

A shepherd is one who cares for a flock. However, a shepherd does not necessarily just care for sheep because anyone can be a shepherd by caring for those around him or her and helping as needed. That caring and helping process also is a protection process. In other words, good shepherds want to gather and keep those in their flock close to the fold.

This process is the foundation of biosecurity. Bio means life, while security means the protection of life. How does one “shepherd” in this fast-paced world? Historically, mountains and water kept the flock isolated. Very little contact was made and living was more secure.

Today, the mountains are minor obstacles and the water is used for entertainment. Our ability to shepherd, to provide effective biosecurity for the living entrusted to us, is challenging. The issue is one of separation: the separation of the unwanted from the fold as a beef, chicken, dairy or swine producer or of the living.

Success means adapting to what is needed. First, make sure the herd or flock is well cared for by providing adequate water, feed, space, ventilation, housing, pens, vaccinations and overall husbandry.

Second, enclose the fold by making sure that outside intrusions are limited. The casual visitor gets to see a picture, not the real critter. New arrivals will have no contact with the existing animals for two to four weeks. This means washing and disinfecting as one arrives home and doing the same thing when going between the old and new animals in residence. Any sick or ill birds or livestock should be isolated.

Third, restrict and/or clean anything that can carry unwanted germs. Clothing, mice, insects, manure or any equipment that can't be cleaned or serves as a vector for germs needs to be done away with.

Fourth, build fences to minimize contact between what is yours and what is someone else's poultry and livestock. There should be no comingling or sharing of feed or space.

Fifth, keep clean facilities, pens and gathering spaces. The proper removal of manure and certainly the proper disposal of carcasses, if a loss has occurred, is critical.

Sixth, learn to be a good observer of your healthy fold or flock members. That way you will know the signs of stress and disease, along with the subtle changes within the herd or flock that are indicative of a pending problem. An early response will minimize the impact of an unwanted event.

Always be prepared to seek quick and timely professional intervention. A veterinarian should be in place to look at the overall herd or flock management and arrangements should be discussed as to 24-hour availability.

Now for the confessions. Maintaining proper and effective biosecurity for a poultry and livestock operation is challenging. If a person really thinks about it, the process is contrary to much of what producers are used to doing.

We like and do visit with each other. We like and do share among ourselves. We like and do invite the neighbors and anyone else who wants to come and view our pride and joy. We like and do exhibit our poultry and livestock to all who will watch. We like and do import genetics from around the world. We like and do travel from sale to sale. We like and do lend a helping hand whenever needed.

We do not like to wash and scrub every day. We do not like to clean barns, fix fences and stay at home.

We see community as just that, a community of friends and also our poultry and livestock. This is why I must confess some consternation with this expectation of restrictions such as protective boots and clothing and bottles of disinfectant.

This freedom to do as one wishes has been part of the lifestyle, but things do change. Gathering those one cares for is still worthy and so is providing the due diligence for their protection. Perhaps the details are cumbersome but learnable.

Uttering words such as "I cannot do that anymore" or "I must now do this" come with difficulty. The fast paced world puts at risk the husbandry we so desire within our operations, large or small.

However, we can change, adapt and implement. We must be proactive, creative and prepared. Producers today need to embrace the concept of less comingling of poultry and livestock, have an expanded definition of a clean house, and be more limited and thoughtful when introducing poultry and livestock to the fold.

I confess that there is difficulty, but I must adapt.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>.

For more information, contact the NDBCIA Office, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601, or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.

