

BIOSECURITY: FACING THE INVISIBLE ENEMIES



By Jennifer Shike

Pork producers go to battle every day against invisible enemies that threaten our industry. From African Swine Fever (ASF) to Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), the impact of these diseases on the U.S. would be devastating. Now's the time to improve biosecurity in your operation.

Russ Nugent, an Arkansas pork producer and chair of the Pork Checkoff's Swine Health Committee, says it's challenging to prevent the entry of something you cannot see, hear, smell, taste or measure, yet alone convince your pork production team to follow suit.

"Avoid the 'just do what I say' approach with your team when it comes to biosecurity," Nugent says. "Develop a biosecurity plan and use it to help educate your team about dealing with pathogens you can't see or perceive. This can help not only with attitudes and execution, but it's likely your team will come up with good ideas that you haven't thought of yet."

Nugent says biosecurity is a mindset.

"We have to try the best we can every minute of every day to have a clear, simple, understandable biosecurity strategy that we can and actually do execute," he adds.

Nugent offered 5 practical biosecurity measures to help producers.

1 Create and respect a clear clean/dirty line.

Make sure you designate what is "outside" of the farm – the area that is potentially more contaminated than the "inside" of the farm.

2 Designate outside boots and clothes, and inside boots and clothes.

If you must go outside the farm and work on a feed bin, take the extra time to change into your outside boots and clothes. Don't be tempted to take it easy and wear your inside clothes outside the clean/dirty line.

3 Wash your hands.

Whether you are coming from the inside or the outside, it's always a good idea to wash your hands with a quality soap before moving on to another section of your facility or farm. Spend at least 20 seconds washing your hands to make sure you have adequate contact time.

4 Use proper footbaths.

Keep a pick or brush handy to remove organic material from your boots to improve your foot bath's effectiveness. Use the proper products and concentration levels when mixing the footbaths.

5 Limit who visits your farm and interacts with your pigs.

Employ a strategy to consider who really needs to come onto your farm and how you will monitor the traffic.

In addition to working with an experienced swine veterinarian who keeps us with the industry, Nugent says it's important to avoid the "we are doing all we can" mindset and encourage your team to always get better when it comes to implementing biosecurity plans.

"And don't forget to celebrate successes," Nugent adds. "Celebrate what might have been avoidance of disease entry through excellent execution of your biosecurity plan because you will see the failures way more than the actual successes, especially in the short-term."