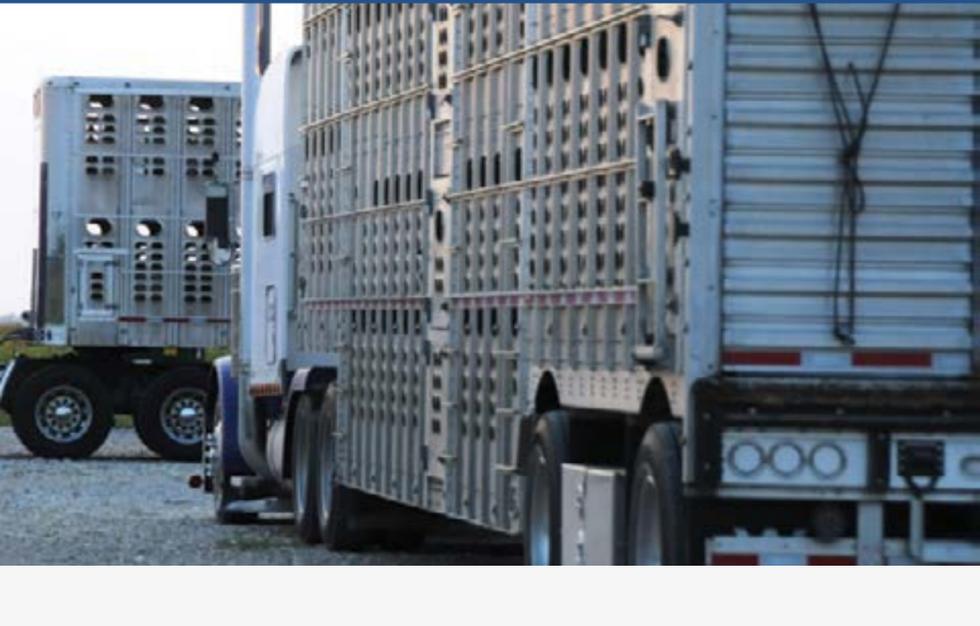


TRANSPORTATION BIOSECURITY: CONTROL WHAT YOU CAN



By Jennifer Shike

There's no denying that our society spends a lot of time worrying about factors we can't control. This is no different for pork producers, especially in 2019. With concerns of African swine fever, tariffs, export challenges and more, Carthage System Veterinarian Clayton Johnson, DVM, suggests producers focus on controlling what they can when it comes to risk management in their pork operations.

Biosecurity is one of the greatest ways to mitigate risk. There are three main principles that come into play when it comes to biosecurity on the farm, including hygiene/sanitation, exclusion and segregation, according to Johnson. He believes biosecurity works best when you have redundancy – at least two of those principles in play.

Transportation biosecurity is an unavoidable risk at most pig operations, but Johnson offered a few tips at the 2019 K-State Swine Profitability Conference in Manhattan, Kan., on Tuesday to help producers maintain a clean/dirty line and hopefully, keep disease out.

“Pigs don't respond to our definition of the clean/dirty line. When it comes to loading a trailer, they often enter the trailer, see and feel a new environment, and instantly attempt to run back across the clean/dirty line,” Johnson says. “People have very good intentions on the rules, but the reality is there will be cross-contamination. My goal is to build another redundant barrier to minimize disease introduction from transport trailers coming onto the farm.”

When possible, he advises dedicating a specific trailer to each sow farm so that trailer only moves between one sow farm and its associated finishing site. In addition, a dirty trailer should never back up to a sow farm for any reason. Always thoroughly clean and disinfect trailers before bringing them back onto your farm.

When you do need to bring a truck onto your farm, there are three practices Johnson recommends.

1 Take the pigs to the truck one cut at a time.

One of our farm managers' biggest concerns was the inability to keep pigs on the trailer during the load-out process, Johnson says. Inevitably, one pig will decide that he's not ready to go and will turn around and run back down the chute. This poses a major biosecurity risk once the pig has stepped onto the trailer.

“It's our rule to not have that happen, but it's impractical to say that it won't happen if the pigs on the trailer aren't confined using the trailers internal gating system,” he adds.

Johnson advises moving pigs to the truck one cut at a time. Work with the trucker in advance to see how many pigs he or she wants in each cut on the trailer. Then, stage that number of pigs in the pre-room before the loadout room or chute so you are moving exactly the number of pigs or cull sows the trucker wants in each compartment, Johnson says.

Once the correct number of pigs are ready to go, open the door to the loadout room or chute, moving pigs forward in one direction, then shut the door to the between the loadout room or chute. This process repeats as pigs are moved onto the trailer. The driver then shuts the gate to each cut once the entire group moves onto the trailer to prevent the pigs from coming back out.

“The easiest way to prevent those pigs from coming back is to have one group of pigs moving forward,” Johnson says. “It becomes an issue, however, when you only take a partial cut – it makes it hard for driver when he has to reopen the cut gate.”

2 Maintain a strict dirty loadout chute or room.

Johnson advises one person (or more if needed due to the size of your alleyways) remains in the dirty loadout chute or room during the entire process. This worker is the only person who comes near the truck itself. The worker should wear disposable coveralls and have dedicated footwear, sorting board and shakers for use in that room only.

“This is where I get nervous about maintaining that clean/dirty line,” Johnson says. “But it can be done if you set the process up so whoever works in the dirty loadout chute or room stays in that dirty area at all times.”

Make sure all shakers and other equipment needed to move pigs forward onto the truck stay in that room, too, he adds.

“Before this worker re-enters the farm, he or she must remove their dedicated footwear and dispose of coveralls and booties before showering back into the farm,” Johnson says.

3 Disinfect immediately.

Before the process starts, Johnson recommends that the dirty loadout chute or room be completely clean and free of as much extraneous supplies or trash as possible.

“Get all the stuff out first,” he says. “If there's an old heater or extra heat lamps, take them out and keep them out. You won't be able to clean the whole room until you start with a clear surface and only the supplies you need for loadout.”

This makes the disinfection and cleaning process much easier and faster, he adds. Once the pigs are done moving through, power wash and disinfect the room. Make sure you have a dedicated high-pressure line in this room with a power washer hook up, he says. Dedicate a wand and hose for the pressure washer that remains in the dirty loadout chute or room.

“You don't want the hose running back into the clean part of the farm,” Johnson says. “Also put a source of heat in that room. You don't need to heat it at all times, but a heater is important during cold months so you can wash and disinfect without everything freezing. Heat is also a very effective biosecurity tool as an addition to your disinfection.”

Don't enter this area until you're ready to load out pigs again, he adds. Even though you've added multiple biosecurity steps, this is still one of the riskiest areas of the farm for outside disease contamination.

Although these practices can be applied to any farm, Johnson says the specifics of how you do it will be different from farm to farm. It's critical to identify the area of your farm where cull sows or pigs will be leaving.

“Where is the last place you have a door before those pigs leave? In some cases, it may be the chute itself,” he says. “In others, it may be a holding room before the chute.”

Don't be afraid to ask your vet for help as you map out your transportation biosecurity plan. Determine the transitional area that you will treat as dirty to prevent unwanted problems from coming onto your farm.