

Maryland 4-H Animal Science Program Guidebook

UNIVERSITY OF
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EXTENSION

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Biosecurity: Exhibit Animals

What is biosecurity and why is it important?

Biosecurity refers to the steps we take to make ensure the health and safety of our animals. The first step in this process begins with selecting a healthy animal. If you are leasing, work with the farm owner to learn more about the health of the herd. Once you select an animal, it is important to work with your veterinarian to develop a health plan to keep your animal healthy. While raising your animal the health plan will likely be very simple, including a vaccination schedule, parasite control and proper nutrition. Should your animal project include traveling to fairs and shows, there are a few more things to consider to keep your animal healthy.

Taking an animal off the farm does increase the risk of exposure to new germs and diseases that could make them sick; however, there are things we can do to minimize the risk of a negative outcome. Below is a list of some practical tips to reduce the risks of contracting and spreading disease.

- Do not bring a sick animal to the fair.
- Make sure the trailer used to haul your animal is clean, and if possible don't stop at other farms once the trailer is loaded.
- Ensure access to clean water and feed in containers brought from your farm.
- Keep your grooming equipment and feed containers separate from those used on other animals. Make sure to disinfect all equipment when you return home from the fair.
- Limit your animal's nose-to-nose contact with other animals.
- Wear rubber boots that can be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected during and after the show to avoid bringing germs back to the farm.
- Discourage fair visitors from feeding your animals and encourage them to use hand sanitizer between touching animals.
- When returning to the farm after the show, the animal(s) should be separated from the rest of the herd or flock for at least two weeks.
- Watch your animal closely during the quarantine time period for signs of disease. If something seems off, contact your veterinarian.
- If visitors arrive at the farm, encourage them to wear clean shoes and clothes to avoid bringing diseases in with them. Disposable one-time use plastic boots are a very easy way to prevent the spread of manure and diseases.

There are so many great things about showing your animal, and by following these few simple tips we can keep your animal healthy throughout the fair season and beyond.