

Title 130 – Biosecurity Procedures for Visits to Farms and Ranches Handbook

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Part 600 – Biosecurity Procedures for Visits to Farms and Ranches Handbook

Subpart A – General

600.0 Summary of Procedure and Purpose

A. This procedure minimizes the risk of NRCS personnel and those acting on their behalf (e.g., soil and water conservation district staff, technical service providers, contractors, grantees, and other partners), hereinafter called “NRCS personnel,” transmitting infectious animal diseases from livestock or poultry facilities, to livestock or poultry at another location, or to humans if the infectious disease is zoonotic in nature. It also minimizes spreading infectious plant diseases, pests, invasive species, and other organisms to crops, pasture, range, and forestland as part of the conservation technical assistance provided for NRCS clients.

- (1) These procedures apply to NRCS personnel whose job responsibilities require them to conduct visits to farms, ranches, and forestland. These visits may be as part of a planning procedure, to install conservation practices, or as part of an assessment or inspection.
- (2) While it may be highly unlikely staff would encounter medical or hazardous wastes, it is imperative to adhere to Title 360, General Manual (GM), Part 420, “Safety and Health Management Program.”
- (3) If, on a case-by-case basis, NRCS personnel believe a change is needed from a provision of this handbook, the situation must be discussed with the appropriate senior official who can provide site-specific guidance. Any such change must be explained and documented in writing. In addition to the requirements set forth in this document, States may make changes to strengthen procedures to align with requirements of the State veterinarian.

600.1 References and Other Associated Procedures

The following references provide additional information:

- (1) Title 130, General Manual (GM), Part 403, Subpart H, “Biosecurity Preparedness and Response,” December 2017
- (2) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Program, “Livestock and Poultry Operation Inspections,” EPA 305-F-14-001, September 2014
- (3) U.S. EPA, “Biosecurity Procedures for Visits to Livestock and Poultry Facilities,” OECA-PROC-2016-010-R0, April 19, 2016
- (4) USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, “National Animal Health Emergency Management System (NAHEMS) Guidelines: Biosecurity,” June 2016

600.2 Definitions

A. Biosecurity.—A series of management practices designed to reduce the risk of disease agents being introduced and spread within animal populations. Similar management practices are used to prevent the spread of invasive or noxious plant species and pests or for prevention of plant disease. In broad terms, it refers to anything designed to prevent the transfer of disease-causing organisms, pests, or invasive species.

B. Extensive Animal Contact.—Extensive animal contact activities involve prolonged, direct contact with livestock or poultry or unprocessed animal tissues, secretions, or excretions.

C. Foreign Animal Diseases.—Federal nomenclature for nonnative animal diseases in the United States, such as highly pathogenic avian influenza, exotic Newcastle Disease, foot-and-mouth disease, classical swine fever, and African swine fever.

D. Invasive Species.—Those species whose introduction causes, or is likely to cause, economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. For the purpose of this policy, a plant species is considered “invasive” when it occurs on the Federal or State-specific noxious weed list, or a list developed by the State-specific department of agriculture and its partners and approved by the State technical committee, that prohibits or cautions its use due to invasive qualities.

E. High Risk Locations.—Sites with existing emergency animal or plant disease events, pests, or invasive species.

F. Level 0 Visit.—Visit to a farm or ranch where there is no expected cause for concern. Typically, in an area where there has been no reported plant or animal disease, pest, or invasive species. An NRCS employee may go about business as usual but must be aware of where they have been and with what they have come in contact.

G. Level 1 Visit.—Visit to a farm or ranch where there is a perceived threat but there will be no direct contact with animals, manure, or their facilities, or with growing crops, harmful plants, pests, or plant and tree diseases.

H. Level 2 Visit.—Visit to a farm or ranch where there is a perceived threat and there will be minimal contact with animals, manure, facilities, mortality, or diseased or invasive plants or pests. Contact is unavoidable to attain the goal of the visit.

I. Level 3 Visit.—Visit to a farm or ranch where there is a perceived threat and there will be close contact, or a reasonable expectation of close contact, with animals, manure, facilities, and mortality. There may be direct contact with plants, fungi, pathogens, or trees where there is potential for infectious disease transmission.

J. Livestock and Poultry Facilities.—Ranches, farms, dairies, feed yards, sale yards, swine premises, slaughterhouses, zoos, veterinarians, laboratories, and other facilities where there are animals or unprocessed animal tissues, secretions, or excretions.

K. Native Species.—With respect to an ecosystem, a species that, other than as a result of an introduction, historically occurred or currently occurs in that ecosystem.

L. Nonnative Species.—Within an ecosystem, any species—including its seeds, eggs, spores, or other biological material capable of propagating that species—that is not native to that ecosystem.

M. Noxious Weeds.—Those plant species designated as such by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary of the Interior, or by State law or regulation. Generally, noxious weeds possess one or more of the characteristics of being aggressive and difficult to manage, parasitic, a carrier or host of deleterious insects or disease, and being nonnative, new to, or not common to the United States or parts thereof.

N. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).—Equipment used as a barrier between an individual and a possible threat, problem, or hazard. As a biosecurity measure, PPE as outer clothing (biosecurity attire), along with the proper protocols, is used to prevent the transmission of pathogens, seeds, and pests via contaminated clothing. PPE can include

things such as cleaned and disinfected work boots, clean clothing, clean coveralls, or disposable boots.

O. Pest.—A weed, insect, disease, animal, or other organism (including invasive and noninvasive species) that directly or indirectly causes damage or annoyance by destroying food and fiber products, causing structural damage, or creating a poor environment for other organisms.

P. State Veterinarian.—The State veterinarian is a State or Tribal official who is the first line of contact with USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and who sets State policy regarding animal disease threats. If the State veterinarian is not available, contact the USDA APHIS veterinarian.

Q. USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program.—The first line of contact related to entry, establishment, and spread of plant pathogens and pests.

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Subpart B – Supplies, Equipment, and Decontamination

600.10 Supply and Equipment Requirements

The following clothing and supplies must be considered for visits to farms and ranches.

- (1) Clothing and personal protective equipment (PPE)
 - (i) Disposable or cloth coveralls; disposable or cloth headwear.
 - (ii) Standard footwear with disposable boot covers, disposable plastic footwear, or reusable cleaned and disinfected rubber or plastic boots.
- (2) Supplies (supplies must be appropriate for planned activities; see section 600.11 for decontamination procedures):
 - (i) Water container(s) for potable water.
 - (ii) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved disinfectant.
 - (iii) Disposable gloves, goggles, and other PPE needed for use of the selected disinfectant.
 - (iv) Spray bottle or aerosol can of disinfectant for disinfecting small items and floorboards.
 - (v) Pump sprayer for disinfecting large items.
 - (vi) Long-handled brush.
 - (vii) Trash bags and resealable, plastic zipper bags.
 - (viii) Paper towels.
 - (ix) EPA-approved soap or antibacterial products or wipes
 - (x) Bucket.
 - (xi) Duct tape to secure plastic boot covers, coveralls, etc.
 - (xii) Waste containers for storing disinfectant rinsate and other liquid waste that are not suitable for disposal onsite.
 - (xiii) Plastic tub for storing “dirty” equipment and PPE in the vehicle.

600.11 Decontamination Procedures

The following procedures must be used to clean equipment, PPE, vehicle tires, and other items that become contaminated.

- (1) Select an EPA-registered disinfectant that is active across a wide spectrum of germs under the conditions it will usually be used.

The State veterinarian, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), or the State department of agriculture may be able to assist with selecting an appropriate disinfectant.
- (2) When onsite, consult the owner or operator to select a location for later decontamination. Where possible, use an existing decontamination area onsite.
- (3) If there is no designated decontamination area already onsite, select an area onsite that will minimize recontamination when leaving the site. The area must allow for proper management of the rinsate (e.g., rinsate will not run off the property).
- (4) If possible, place clean clothing to change into, as appropriate, in a closed bag at the decontamination site.

- (5) If possible, place all needed decontamination supplies, including sufficient water or access to running water, at the decontamination site.
- (6) Mix the disinfectant (if not ready-to-use) according to label directions and use appropriate PPE (e.g., gloves, eye protection).
- (7) Brush or rinse the contaminated item to remove all visible manure and other debris.
- (8) Apply disinfectant to the item or place the item in a container of disinfectant, according to label directions. Allow the disinfectant to remain in contact with the item for the required length of time as listed on the label or according to manufacturer recommendations.
- (9) Rinse with water if and as directed on the disinfectant label.
- (10) Place the decontaminated item in a clean location or in a clean bag or other container.
- (11) Manage or contain rinsate if needed, and as appropriate.
- (12) Dispose of used disinfectant according to label directions.

600.12 Procedures for Visiting Farms and Ranches

The NRCS State office will maintain communication with APHIS or the State veterinarian and provide information on threats to field staff.

- (1) Procedures for visits to non-high-risk locations:
 - (i) The procedures below provide basic biosecurity practices NRCS personnel must follow when visiting farms, ranches, and other facilities with no known animal or plant diseases, pests, or invasive species, and where extensive contact is not planned.
 - (ii) Facility operators may have adopted more stringent biosecurity measures (e.g., showering and changing clothes to come on to or leave the premises). NRCS personnel must discuss appropriate biosecurity measures with the owner/operator and are encouraged to adopt more stringent measures, as appropriate, into the procedures for that specific facility. If no specific protocol is identified by the owner/operator, NRCS personnel must use the level of biosecurity appropriate for the visit.
 - (iii) Prior to the visit:
 - Avoid wearing or using any apparel or equipment that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected. Consider bringing bags to keep sensitive equipment such as phones and cameras clean.
 - Avoid visiting multiple animal farms in one day. If this is not possible, when visiting a facility with various age groups of one species of animal in one day, visit the youngest animal group first. Poultry is an exception. Poultry breeding stock must be visited before other commercial birds.
 - If NRCS personnel operate a farm or own animals of potential biosecurity interest, make sure that clothes, shoes, and the NRCS representative are clean and free from becoming a potential transfer or contamination point to the visited operation.
 - Designate a part of the vehicle to carry “dirty” items, preferably separate from the “clean” part of the vehicle where clean supplies are placed (e.g., the dirty area could be inside the trunk of a car).
 - Identify an appropriate location for disposal of soiled disposable items in case the owner/operator will not allow the waste to remain onsite.
 - (iv) Beginning the visit:
 - Close vehicle windows.

- If possible, park vehicle on paved or gravel areas away from pens, pastures, or areas where animals may be held to avoid contact with dirt, urine, litter, wastewater, or manure. If possible, when working on cropland, range, pasture, or forest land, park at the edge of fields on a defined roadway to avoid contamination, recognizing that the sheer size of the area in question might make this stipulation untenable.
 - Wash hands with soap and potable water or use antibacterial wipes or gel before entering the site.
 - The facility staff may request that the NRCS personnel's vehicle tires be disinfected prior to entering the farm or ranch.
 - Upon entering a facility, inform a responsible representative of all other facilities visited within the previous 48 hours and whether there was entry to any animal confinement, waste storage, or cropping areas.
 - Discuss appropriate biosecurity measures with the owner/operator. Facility operators may have adopted more stringent biosecurity measures (e.g., showering and changing clothes to come onto or leave the premises). NRCS personnel are encouraged to adopt more stringent measures, as appropriate, into the procedures for that specific facility.
 - Enter pens or buildings where animals are housed or confined only if it is essential to complete the goals of the visit. NRCS personnel must be accompanied by or authorized to do so by the facility operator.
 - Avoid contact to the extent possible with livestock, poultry, or other animals (wild or domestic) on any facility.
- (2) Procedures for visits to high-risk locations and visits with extensive animal or crop contact:
- (i) NRCS will not perform work on farms or ranches in areas with ongoing emergency foreign animal or plant disease response activities (e.g., vaccination program, depopulation, disposal, or virus elimination). The NRCS State office will consult with the State veterinarian or APHIS to determine when quarantines have ended, and it is safe to resume work in the area to communicate this to field staff. If a specific request for assistance is made by the State veterinarian or APHIS official, NRCS personnel can perform the work. The PPE required by the State veterinarian or APHIS official will be used.
- If NRCS personnel anticipate they will have extensive contact with animals or plants during a visit to an operation, they must consult with the producer or the State veterinarian or APHIS and their health and safety staff to identify appropriate biosecurity procedures.
- (ii) After the visit, follow procedures below in sections 600.13 and 600.14 as appropriate.

600.13 Procedures at the Completion of the Visit

Procedures at the completion of the visit include:

- (1) If not discussed earlier, inform the owner/operator of the areas of the site that were visited and the biosecurity procedures followed.
- (2) Nondisposable items:
 - (i) Remove any nondisposable boots and coveralls and, where appropriate, clean and disinfect them onsite using decontamination procedures.

- (ii) If nondisposable items are not cleaned and disinfected onsite, place them in the “dirty” area of the vehicle in a manner that minimizes contamination of the vehicle to be cleaned and disinfected later. For example, place “dirty” items together in a covered plastic tub.
- (3) Disposable items:
 - (i) Place all soiled disposable items in plastic garbage bags and close securely.
 - (ii) If the outside of the garbage bag became contaminated, wash it off and decontaminate the outside of the bag according to decontamination procedures.
 - (iii) If acceptable to the owner/operator, leave the plastic bag with soiled disposable items onsite for disposal.
 - (iv) If it is not possible to leave the bag onsite, ensure the bag is closed securely, double bag it, and place it in the “dirty” area of the vehicle.
- (4) If the vehicle or tires became contaminated with dirt, urine, blood, wastewater, or manure, wash and disinfect the vehicle tires and wheel wells at a location onsite designated by the owner/operator if possible.
- (5) If it is not possible to wash and disinfect the vehicle or tires completely onsite, take the vehicle to a car wash before taking the vehicle to another facility. Record when and where the car was washed in the vehicle logbook.
- (6) Wash hands with soap and potable water or use antibacterial wipes or gel before leaving the site.

600.14 Procedures for the End of the Day

NRCS personnel must follow the procedures below after all visits to farms and ranches have been completed for the day.

- (1) If it was not possible to leave used, disposable items at the facility where they were utilized, return the double-bagged garbage bag to the preselected location for disposal or other location identified through consultation with appropriate supervisory staff.
- (2) Clean or launder all reusable clothing in hot water with a disinfectant soap.
- (3) Clean and disinfect equipment according to decontamination procedures.
- (4) Take a shower.
- (5) Check and replenish supplies as necessary to ensure all needed supplies are ready for the next visit.

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Subpart C – Activities Appropriate by Risk Level

600.20 Level 0 Visits: Visits to Farms and Ranches When There Is No Perceived Threat

Unless requested by the producer, during these times, biosecurity measures will be minimal. NRCS personnel can go about business as usual but must maintain an awareness of where they have been and with what they have come into contact. NRCS personnel will wash or disinfect hands before and after the visit and make sure clothes, footwear, and vehicles are cleaned of mud, dust, and debris.

600.21 Level 1 Visits: Visits to Farms and Ranches When There Is Perceived Threat but There Is No Contact With Animals, Manure, Facilities or With Growing Crops, Harmful Plants, Pests, or Plant Diseases

A. In addition to the requirements for visits described in this manual (see subpart B, sections 600.12(1) and (2)), for Level 1 visits:

Wear appropriate shoe coverings (e.g., boot covers), clean shoes, or boots that can be rinsed and washed with disinfectant. After the visit, inspect shoes prior to entering the vehicle. Clean shoes or boots if they became contaminated with manure, according to decontamination procedures.

B. After the visit, follow the procedures in this manual (see subpart B, sections 600.13 and 14) as appropriate.

600.22 Level 2 Visits: Visits to Farms/Ranches Where There Is a Perceived Threat and There Will Be Minimal Contact With Animals, Facilities, Mortality, Diseased or Invasive Plants or Pests. Contact Is Unavoidable to Attain the Goal of the Visit

A. In addition to the requirements for visits described in this manual (see subpart B, sections 600.12(1) and (2)), for Level 2 visits:

- (1) Upon arrival and exiting the vehicle, put on new plastic or disinfected rubber boots or other footwear that has been cleaned and disinfected, or wear new disposable boot covers. The operator may supply boots, boot covers, or other personal protection equipment (PPE) for you to wear.
- (2) NRCS personnel are encouraged to wear disposable coveralls to prevent contamination of clothing. This decision must be made on a case-by-case basis.

B. After the visit, follow the procedures in this manual (see subpart B, sections 600.13 and 14) as appropriate.

600.23 Level 3 Visits: In the Rare Instance Where There Would Be Visits to Facilities Where There Is a Perceived Threat and There Will Be Close Contact, or a Reasonable Expectation of Close Contact, With Livestock or Poultry, Animals, Manure, Facilities, and Mortality. There May Be Direct Contact With Plants or Trees Where There Is Potential for Infectious Disease Transmission

A. In addition to the requirements for visits described in this manual (see subpart B, sections 600.12(1) and (2)), for Level 3 visits:

- (1) Upon arrival and exiting the vehicle, put on new plastic or disinfected rubber boots or other footwear that has been cleaned and disinfected or wear new disposable boot covers. The operator may supply boots, boot covers, or other PPE for you to wear.
- (2) Put on a pair of new disposable or clean coveralls for each visit if personnel will have, or there is a reasonable expectation of, close contact with livestock or poultry (e.g., walking through narrowly confined pens or lots where animals are within reach).
- (3) When entering areas where animals will be within reach, personnel must consider wearing disposable gloves and hair nets.
- (4) After visiting areas in which animals are in close proximity, NRCS personnel may remove disposable items and resume the inspection in apparel appropriate for the remainder of the visit.

B. After the visit, follow the procedures in this manual (see subpart B, sections 600.13 and 14) as appropriate.