

## 8 Essential Actions to Protect Pigs with Outdoor Access from Disease

Raising pigs outside, even for only part of their lives, presents some unique concerns for keeping them healthy. These animals are more likely to be exposed to disease than pigs raised indoors, but there are simple steps you can take as a producer to protect your pigs. It's all about practicing good biosecurity. Biosecurity reduces the chance of disease entering your farm or spreading on your farm. If disease does enter, biosecurity can help keep the illness from becoming severe.

Biosecurity is best when it becomes a part of your normal routine. You may already take many biosecurity actions, but it's always a good idea to review your biosecurity regularly. The biosecurity actions listed below will help you develop a plan that works best for your farm.

### Action 1 – Keep pigs healthy

Proper care is the foundation for preventing disease. Help your pigs remain healthy by providing:

- Proper feeding - work with your veterinarian, extension agent, and feed representative to make sure your pigs are eating the right ration for their age and their intended use. **NOTE:** Feeding your own kitchen scraps is not allowed in all states. Feeding food waste with meat, if allowed in your state, requires a license. Contact Veterinary Services or your State Department of Agriculture for more information.
- Fresh water - Do not use surface water, such as ponds or streams, as it may contain viruses or bacteria.
- Clean sleeping areas - provide a dry, clean place out of the weather for pigs to sleep.
- Vaccination – vaccines can prevent disease or make an illness less serious. Talk to your veterinarian about which vaccines your pigs may need to stay healthy.
- Parasite control – develop a deworming plan with your veterinarian; clean up and properly dispose of manure often; and keep weeds in and around pastures trimmed to control ticks.

Avoid spreading disease. Work with young pigs first, followed by older pigs, then with any newly purchased or borrowed pigs (who are being isolated for 30 days). Always work with sick pigs last.

### Action 2 – Buy or borrow from disease-free herds

- Purchase or borrow pigs from herds that are free of diseases such as Brucellosis, Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea, and Pseudorabies. When possible, buy from herds that test negative, rather than testing only the pigs you are buying. Look for herds that are Validated Swine Brucellosis-free and Qualified Pseudorabies negative (VQ Herds); this status is earned annually, so be sure to ask how long the herd held this status. **NOTE:** Do not rely on State disease free status for brucellosis and pseudorabies if you buy pigs from other herds with outdoor access. This status applies only to commercially raised, indoor herds.

## 8 ESSENTIAL ACTIONS

Keep Pigs Healthy  
Buy or Borrow from  
Disease-free Herds  
Keep It Clean  
Keep Wildlife and Insects  
under Control  
Don't Carry Disease Home  
Don't Let Visitors and  
Workers Bring Disease to  
Your Pigs  
Don't Let Pigs Bring  
Disease Home  
Write a Biosecurity Plan

- Isolate all new animals– keep purchased or borrowed pigs away from your herd for 30 days. During the isolation period, keep the isolated pigs from sharing the following with the rest of your herd: airspace (if housed indoors), fence line contact, drainage areas, equipment, coveralls and boots. Keep dedicated equipment and protective clothing in the isolation area. A plastic tote can be used if your isolation area is outdoors. Put up physical barriers (fences, cones, chains or ropes) and signs (“Caution – Isolation Area”) to remind everyone there is something different about the pigs in this area.

### **Action 3 – Keep it clean**

Keep pig pastures, housing, and your farm clean

- Dispose of manure – don’t let it pile up. Remove manure from pig housing and pastures regularly to help limit the spread of intestinal parasites and disease. Manure removal helps reduce flies that can spread disease.
- Dispose of manure following your State’s requirements. Your extension agent can provide information on manure disposal methods allowed in your state.
- Remove dead animals as soon as they are found. Dispose of carcasses outside of the animal area that drains away from your pigs. Cover carcasses to prevent scavengers and insects from spreading disease. Extension agents can provide more information on carcass disposal methods your state allows.
- Dispose of unused, broken equipment; unusable food and water containers; and trash. These items can collect water and become mosquito breeding sites, or serve as rodent nesting sites.
- Check pig sleepers every day and keep the pig sleeping area clean and dry.
- Clean water troughs/containers at least once a week. During mosquito season, check them every day and change the water whenever you see mosquito larvae.
- Clean and disinfect equipment at the end of the day or after each use. Clean front-end loaders or other equipment used to remove dead animals with detergent, then spray with disinfectant.

### **Action 4 – Keep wildlife and insects under control**

- Have a rodent control program in place. Make sure to empty traps every day; clean up spilled feed; and check that feed is stored in rodent proof, covered containers.
- Have an insect control program in place. Trim weeds around pastures and buildings, properly dispose of manure and use appropriate control methods, such as fly predators, insecticides, and insect traps.
- Eliminate standing water. This prevents mosquito breeding areas from forming and keeps certain harmful bacteria carried by wild animals from lingering on the farm.
- Keep wildlife out of pig areas – wild waterfowl can introduce avian influenza and other diseases to your herd. Other types of wildlife can introduce leptospirosis, tuberculosis, and even rabies to your pigs. There are many methods to keep waterfowl and other wildlife out of your pastures. Contact your state wildlife agency or USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service’s Wildlife Services program for more information on controlling or eliminating wildlife from your pastures.

- Don't overfeed your pigs – pigs should eat and clean up their feed area quickly so no leftovers remain to attract wildlife.
- Keep out wild or stray pigs – Fences need to keep your pigs in AND keep feral pigs out. Walk your fence lines to ensure fences are intact. Using double fencing or adding electric fences to existing fence systems are the best options for keeping your pigs away from feral pigs and possible illness.

### **Action 5 – Don't carry disease home**

When you visit livestock shows, sales, open houses, slaughter facilities and neighboring farms – or are around pigs anywhere but your farm, make sure you don't bring disease home with you.

- Wear shoes or boots that can be cleaned and disinfected when visiting other places with livestock. Scrub and disinfect shoes/boots before getting in your vehicle to come home. If water is unavailable, brush off dirt and manure, then spray with disinfectant. Or simply wear disposable coveralls and boots, and remove them just before you step into your vehicle to return home.
- Before returning home, wash your vehicle, including the undercarriage. Then, disinfect the wheels, tires and undercarriage. Use a garden sprayer or power washer with properly mixed disinfectant to easily reach these areas.
- Keep the cab of your vehicle clean – especially the driver side floor and pedals. Spray them with disinfectant after removing loose dirt.
- Don't park your vehicle near the pig housing – both when visiting others and at home.
- Shower and change all of your clothing – including hats – as soon as you arrive home. While in the shower, cough, spit, and blow your nose to remove any viruses from your nose and lungs and wash them down the drain.
- Do not work with your pigs immediately when you get home. If possible, stay away from your pigs at least overnight (8 hours).

### **Action 6 – Don't let visitors and workers bring disease to your pigs**

Make a clear “line of separation” – a visible boundary that clearly shows “outside” and “inside” the pig area. Post signs, put up barriers (e.g. gates, fences, cones with chains), and enforce the rules of entry to “inside” the pig area. Have a footbath and scrub brush at every entry.

- Keep feed delivery trucks, trucks hauling pigs, garbage trucks, and dead stock haulers from crossing the line into the pig area.
  - The loading/unloading ramp should be outside the line. Pigs can walk over the line into/out of the pig area to the ramp.
  - Feed delivery/long-term storage should be outside the line of separation.
  - Dead stock haulers should pick up carcasses near the end of the farm driveway whenever possible.
  - Garbage should be picked up near the end of the driveway when possible.
- Anyone who must cross the line of separation (farm workers, veterinarians, extension agents, pig buyers, electricians, plumbers, etc.) must follow these rules:
  - Park their vehicle away from pig housing and “outside” the line of separation.

- Shower and change all clothes (including hats) after working with other people's pigs before coming to your farm.
- No contact with other pigs (this includes at sales or shows) at least overnight before visiting your farm.
- No traveling out of the United States for at least 5 days.
- No flu-like symptoms.
- Wear disinfected footwear and clean coveralls.
- Use the footbath before crossing the line. Remove dirt and manure from footwear and scrub footwear with disinfectant before entering the pig area. Be sure the footbath is changed several times daily (according to disinfectant instructions) and kept clean. If cold weather freezes the footbath, use spray disinfectants instead.

### **Action 7 - Don't let pigs bring disease home**

Pigs which have been off the farm – at a veterinary hospital, show, or on loan for breeding – can bring diseases home with them. Purchased or borrowed pigs, even those from test negative herds, can bring in diseases and parasites.

- Isolate all returning pigs for at least 30 days. Use the same isolation methods as used for purchased and borrowed animals. While 30 days seems like a long time, you can't test for every illness the pig may have encountered at the show or on another farm. Ask yourself "Is it worth risking the rest of my herd?"
- With your veterinarian, discuss the need for testing or treatments for returning pigs before mixing them with the resident herd. Factors to consider include where the pigs went, how long they were gone, and why they were gone.
- Never bring a pig home from a slaughter only auction or from a slaughter facility.

### **Action 8 – Write a farm biosecurity plan - use it, review it, update it**

For more information, do a web search on "biosecurity pasture raised pigs." Review the information on sites from universities, agricultural extension, and national pig groups (National Pork Board, Northeast Organic Farming Association, the Livestock Conservancy).

- Walk through your farm using the checklist. Note what is done well and what needs improvement.
- Discuss biosecurity with your veterinarian, extension agent, and/or State or Federal animal health officials. Use the completed checklist you completed as a guide.
- Write a biosecurity plan for your farm. The plan should note who is responsible for each area (who cleans the footbath, who monitors the rodent control program, etc.).
- Review the biosecurity plan with everyone who works on the farm. Review the plan with them again as changes are made or when you note areas needing improvement.
- Check that the plan is working – do a farm walk through with the check list, every 3 months at first, and then twice a year. Amend and update the plan as needed.

## Making a Footbath

To make a footbath, you will need:

1. A low plastic or rubber pan or bin, wide enough to fit an adult's foot and shallow enough to step into easily.
2. A scrubbing doormat (the "fake grass" or coconut husk mats work well).
3. A disinfectant that works well for most situations, such as Tek-trol or One Stroke Environ.
4. Water.

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Mix the disinfectant with water according to the label instructions. Put the doormat in the pan. Add the disinfectant so that the bottom of the mat is wet. Ask visitors to walk through the footbath, wiping their feet on the mat. The mat scrubs their shoes as they wipe them and applies the disinfectant. Empty and put in new solution following the disinfectant label instructions. If it starts to look dirty, change the footbath solution.

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For more information, see **Biosecurity for Pigs with Outdoor Access Factsheet** or **Biosecurity for Pigs with Outdoor Access Checklist**