

Dairy Industry and Biosecurity (Planning ahead)

Alejandro R. Castillo
Dairy Farm Adviser, UCCE Merced & Stanislaus Counties

According to experts, dairies are exposed to biological risks on multiple fronts. Dairy farms have to be prepared for an accidental or a deliberate disease outbreak and/or food safety incident. Each property should be evaluated for possible risks, vulnerabilities, and weakness to intentional or unintentional diseases, toxins or chemical attacks.

A biosecurity program needs to be implemented in each dairy farm. This program should spell out the management practices needed: (a) to avoid, prevent, or minimize; and (b) to control or operate during a disease outbreak or a chemical attack. Un-authorized persons should be excluded from the operation. Every person visiting or working on the dairy need to know that you have a biosecurity program and that they are expected to follow it.

Involving your employees in the development and implementation of the biosecurity program is essential. Designate an employee who will be responsible in implementing biosecurity and food safety issues, and rotate this responsibility between the employees in different periods of time. Everyone on the farm needs to know what to do in the event of an incident.

Each farm is unique but, here are some steps that you should consider:

1. Reduce the number of entrances with fencing gates and locks.
2. Post visible signs restricting access to anyone not employed by the operation and include clear instructions for visitors.
3. Have a designated parking area for employees and visitors.
4. All visitors must be required to wear clean clothes, sign in and disclose their last known contact with animals.
5. Limit access to your animals, food storage and equipment.
6. Limit access to rendering trucks, by having the dead pile at the perimeter of your operation but avoid having the dead animals visible to the general public.
7. Have quarantine for newly introduced animals.
8. Improve lighting at night: milk house and parlor, feed bunks and equipment areas.
9. Secure and lock the bulk tank, animal drugs and chemicals.
10. Wells and water sources should be protected from intentional and accidental contamination.

All your plans should be checked with your Veterinarian. For more information you can contact the CDFA Emergency Programs in Sacramento (916-654-1447), Modesto (209-491-9350) or Tulare District (559-685-3500). More specific recommendations related to biosecurity and to animal health will be published in future newsletters. All these materials, including this newsletter will be written in Spanish. (*In: AGRIBUSINESS DAIRYMAN 2006, 25(8):12*)