

BIOSECURITY PRINCIPLES: *PROTECTING YOUR INVESTMENT*

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Although the magnitude of economic value is usually much less in small standard-bred poultry operations compared to multimillion-dollar commercial chicken or turkey companies, there are still many reasons to protect your investment. *Value* is not always measured in simple dollar terms.

As exhibition poultry producers, you have put much time and effort into your enterprise. Coops and pens have been built, breeder stock purchased, incubation and brooding arrangements made. Much time is spent daily feeding, watering and preparing birds for show. What about the countless hours spent at the shows, not to mention travel time back and forth?

Clearly, serious thought should be given to protecting your own flock as well as those of fellow exhibitors. With this in mind, let's look at a few basic principles that will help you remain disease free.

THE UNTOUCHABLES

1. Viruses, bacteria, and other disease-causing organisms do not think rationally. Plain and simply, these organisms are out to survive with no thought of the suffering imposed on others.
2. You can't break even the simplest biosecurity principle without being in danger of reaping the consequences.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. Know your enemy. Learn how disease is spread and propagated. Know where and how disease organisms live. Contact your Extension veterinarian or poultry specialist for specific information.
2. Do not visit neighbors' flocks or hatcheries unless absolutely necessary.
3. Always consider your own chickens as potential disease-carriers and everyone else's chickens the same.
4. "Cleanliness is next to godliness." Keep facilities clean and tidy. Get rid of trash, old feed spills, and hiding places that may harbor rodents and predators.
5. Keep birds in a comfortable environment. Provide adequate ventilation, heat, and clean bedding. Particularly avoid ammonia buildup and extreme temperature fluctuations. In a

nutshell, just put yourself in your birds' position: If you had to live where they live, is there anything that would make you uncomfortable? If so, chances are high that your chickens would be uncomfortable, too. Fix it.

RULES OF THUMB

1. ***NEVER*** take a bird you would not be willing to sacrifice to a show!
2. ***NEVER*** bring home a bird from a show and put it directly back into the flock! (*Quarantine for 2-3 weeks*)
3. ***NEVER*** purchase a bird from an unknown or unreliable source.
4. ***NEVER*** purchase a bird if you are unsure of its health status.
5. ***NEVER*** sell a bird if you are unsure of its health status.

COMMON SENSE

Practicing good biosecurity is mainly just a matter of following general sanitary principles. First, visit youngest to oldest as you feed and water during your daily routine. Second, wash hands with an antibacterial product between visits to groups of birds. Third, change into clean clothes before visiting other poultry flocks or fellow exhibitors, and change clothes again before you return to your own chickens. Fourth, wash and disinfect boots or shoes before entering any area where chickens or other domestic poultry are housed; wash and disinfect again upon leaving the premises. Fifth, keep your birds in a clean, comfortable environment that is protected from wild birds, insects, rodents, and potential predators, such as dogs, cats, skunks, or raccoons.

Constantly practice correct biosecurity principles until they become an unconscious habit – much like we become accustomed to the “rules of the road” as a driver, or proper gun safety techniques as a hunter. Following proper biosecurity practices is akin to providing adequate insurance and preventive measures to protect your home and family. Theft and illness may still occur, but the likelihood of having a serious economic disaster is greatly reduced.

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