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BIOSECURITY FOR INSPECTING OR VISITING CONFINED FEEDING OPERATIONS

Operational Policy 2014-1

Agricultural Operation Practices Act
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1. Background and objectives

The Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) is committed to minimizing the potential risk of transmitting animal diseases by NRCB personnel and vehicles. Operational Policy 2014-1: *Biosecurity* provides a proactive approach to minimizing the risk of transmitting pathogens when conducting site visits and has been updated as of August 23, 2021 to reflect current best practices. This operational policy applies to all NRCB personnel.

When visiting/inspecting a site, there is always a risk of coming into contact with livestock or manure, and therefore exposure to pathogens. This policy outlines protocols that must be taken to reduce the risk of transmitting livestock diseases from one site or region to another.

This policy also helps reduce the risk to NRCB personnel and producers from exposure to zoonotic diseases (diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans).

Biosecurity practices are influenced by factors such as:

- the disease status of the site
- the NRCB's biosecurity protocol level of an area
- the site's existing biosecurity protocol
- the degree of contact with livestock or manure during the farm visit
- recent exposure or activities with livestock or manure
- industry standards

For the purposes of this policy, a biosecurity area means any area where livestock are confined or manure is located (areas where there is potential for zoonotic transmission to occur). Examples include, but are not limited to, confined feeding operations (CFOs), manure spreading lands, manure storage facilities, bio-digestate facilities, seasonal feeding and bedding sites, and other animal grazing operations.

2. Guiding principles

People who travel from site to site, but have no contact with livestock or manure, can still pose a risk for disease transmission. Biosecurity protocols must be followed to minimize the risk of disease transmission, and can include the following:

- Where possible, avoid same-day visits to different sites that have the same or common livestock species (i.e. bison and sheep, poultry).
- To prevent unnecessary exposure, avoid entering a biosecurity area unless it is required to perform your job duties.
- If appropriate and possible obtain entry permission from the operator before entering the biosecurity area. Confirm and follow the biosecurity protocols of the site operator or the NRCB whichever is more stringent, for the site.
- Most infectious agents are microscopic. Visual inspection will not identify contamination of clothing or footwear. Assume that any clothing or footwear that has come into contact with livestock or animal manure is potentially contaminated.
- Vehicles are also a potential pathway for disease transmission. Keep your vehicle out of biosecurity areas unless it is absolutely necessary. If you use your vehicle to enter a biosecurity area, it must be cleaned in accordance with the appropriate biosecurity protocol level (see section 3, below).

- Regularly clean your NRCB vehicle, including vacuuming and wiping down the interior, even if you have not used the vehicle to enter a biosecurity area and you do not believe that it is contaminated.
- Inform your manager if you come into contact with livestock (including livestock or pets that you own or look after) that are diagnosed with a reportable disease that may pose a biosecurity hazard. Do not conduct site visits or inspections until you no longer pose a biosecurity risk, as confirmed by your disease specialist (veterinarian, doctor) and manager.
- International travel by NRCB field staff may pose a higher than normal risk of disease transmission, especially if livestock, livestock manure, and/or livestock producer contact occurred, knowingly or unknowingly. Field staff must follow applicable laws about visiting farms after international travel.
- Follow direction from the Office of the Chief Provincial Veterinarian regarding protocols for identified disease outbreaks.
- Should a biosecurity crisis occur, NRCB staff will work directly with the leading agency for the crisis, for example: the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) or Agriculture and Forestry (AF). NRCB staff will follow any protocols required and assist where necessary.
- To ensure this policy remains up to date, it will be reviewed every three years.

All NRCB field staff have been supplied with NRCB biosecurity log books to track biosecurity procedures followed (including vehicle washes/cleanings) when conducting site visits or inspections. The log books have duplicate pages so one copy can be placed in the file (and/or uploaded into the NRCB CFO database) and the second can remain in the log book as a record. Vehicle washes can alternatively be tracked on expense accounts where staff have annual memberships or purchase wash vouchers. If purchasing pre-buy wash bay tickets ensure the use of them is recorded in the log book.

3. NRCB biosecurity levels

The NRCB's biosecurity protocol is based on the relative risk of coming into contact with livestock or manure, and therefore the level of potential exposure to pathogens. There are three levels of biosecurity protocol: biosecurity area not entered (level 1); biosecurity area entered (level 2); and known/suspected biosecurity risk (level 3).

Note: NRCB staff are required to conform to an operator's biosecurity protocol if it is more stringent than the protocols in this operational policy, regardless of the site visited or its risk level. Otherwise, the NRCB's biosecurity protocols must be followed.

As a general rule, NRCB staff should use disposable coveralls instead of cloth coveralls whenever possible. Cloth coveralls must be machine washed, and machine washing at home can introduce a potential source of contamination and might not offer a thorough enough cleaning. Disposable coveralls reduce this risk.

3.1 Level 1—Biosecurity area not entered

A level 1 biosecurity area is a site that has not yet been populated with livestock, or it is an existing site or facility where NRCB staff and their vehicle remain outside of the biosecurity area containing livestock or manure.

Personnel:

- Reasonable precautions must be taken in order to avoid contact with livestock, manure, or animal feed.

Vehicle:

- No extra precautions are required, however, if multiple site visits are conducted on the same day, the vehicle should be washed between site visits whenever possible.

3.2 Level 2—Biosecurity area entered

At a level 2 biosecurity area, NRCB staff visit a site or facility that houses livestock or manure, including recent manure spreading lands (before or after a crop has been seeded or harvested).

Personnel:

- Follow the operator's biosecurity protocols when entering areas where manure is located.
 - If the operator does not have specific biosecurity protocols, clean footwear, or protective footwear covers must be worn.
 - Before getting back into the vehicle, clean or remove and bag footwear that has come into contact with manure. Any soiled clothing must be machine washed. Boots must be cleaned and disinfected.
- When entering biosecurity areas where livestock are housed, the operator's biosecurity protocols must be followed.
 - If the operator does not have specific biosecurity protocols, clean footwear, or protective footwear covers must be worn. Wear protective coveralls and possibly disposable gloves, if required by the operator, if you may come into direct contact with livestock.
 - Before getting back into the vehicle, remove and bag protective clothing and footwear that has come into contact with livestock or manure.
 - Any soiled clothing must be machine washed. Boots must be cleaned and disinfected.
 - Disposable protective-footwear covers or disposable coveralls that are used during the visit must be removed and discarded into a container (bag) that can be sealed and disposed of either at the CFO site or later.
 - Cloth coveralls (if worn) must be machine washed after every site visit.

Vehicle:

- Where possible, avoid driving vehicles into biosecurity areas.
- If you need to drive your vehicle into a biosecurity area, follow the operator's site biosecurity protocols.
- If the site does not have specific biosecurity protocols, minimize potential contact of the vehicle with livestock and manure.
- Use disposable floor mat covers when possible.
- When you transport owners or operators in your vehicle, ensure that your vehicle is cleaned and wiped down before visiting/inspecting your next site.
- Clean, remove, and bag protective clothing/footwear before getting back into the vehicle.

- Dispose of all disposable personal protective equipment used during the site visit, as well as disposable floor mat covers, into a container (bag) that can be sealed and disposed of either at the CFO site or later.
- The vehicle exterior, and if necessary, the interior floor mats must be washed prior to the next site visit/inspection. Where appropriate, the interior of the vehicle should also be vacuumed and sanitized as needed (including steering wheel and foot pedals).
- Virkon can be used to sanitize vehicles and footwear. Each vehicle must be equipped with Virkon (tablets or powder) and a spray bottle or spray top that can be attached to a water bottle.

3.3 Level 3—Known or suspected biosecurity risk

If possible, postpone or delay visits/inspections to a site with a known biosecurity risk until the biosecurity risk level has decreased and it is considered to be safe as declared by the operator or appropriate regulatory authority (Chief Provincial Veterinarian, CFIA). All level two cleaning and disposal requirements for clothing and vehicles must be followed.

Personnel:

- NRCB staff must not enter the biosecurity area at a site with a known biosecurity risk unless absolutely necessary, and not until after they have received permission from their manager and appropriate regulatory authority to enter the area.
- If entry does occur, staff must conform to the protocols specified by the site owner/operator or on-site regulatory agencies such as the CFIA, whichever requires the higher standard.

NOTE:

- Disposable protective clothing and boot covers must be worn at all times. Cloth coveralls and boots without disposable boot covers must not be worn. A respiratory mask may also be required.
- Equipment such as cell phones, clipboards, pens, GPS, etc. could become contaminated during the site visit. All equipment used must be sanitized following the visit and before another site visit/inspection.

Vehicle:

- NRCB vehicles must not enter the biosecurity area at a site with a known biosecurity risk unless absolutely necessary and not until after permission has been received from a manager and appropriate regulatory authority to enter the area.
- If entry does occur, staff must conform to the protocols specified by the site owner/operator or on-site agencies such as the CFIA, whichever requires the higher standard.
- All precautions must be taken to minimize the risk of contaminating the vehicle. Follow the level 2 protocols for the vehicle exterior and interior. In addition:
 - wheels, wheel wells, exterior steps, floor mats, pedals, etc. that may have come into contact with manure must be sprayed down with Virkon or an equivalent disinfectant prior to leaving the site.

- the exterior of the vehicle and the interior floor mats must be cleaned. Vacuum the vehicle interior. Use Virkon to sanitize the vehicle exterior, the interior floor mats, and the vehicle interior.

4. Preparation for site visits

- Where practical, contact the site owner/operator ahead of time to arrange the site visit/inspection and determine which biosecurity protocol(s) must be followed. An inspection initiated by a complaint may be an exception to this approach.
- Advise the owner/operator of your recent site visits/inspections to other facilities/CFOs. This will allow them to assess whether or not you may pose a biosecurity risk to their operation, and which areas may require restricted access.
- Determine the level (1, 2, or 3) of required biosecurity protocols and obtain the appropriate biosecurity equipment and supplies prior to your arrival at the site, as per the required biosecurity level protocol.
- If entry to a level 1 or 2 biosecurity area is required, all biosecurity protocols used at the site can be recorded in the biosecurity log book for future reference.
- If entry to a level 3 biosecurity area is required, all biosecurity protocols used at the site must be documented (NRCB CFO database), including any direction provided by other regulatory authorities.

5. Biosecurity supply kits for fleet vehicles

The following supplies must be in the vehicle when visiting a biosecurity area. Some supply needs may vary depending on the site and on the weather. NRCB personnel who are using their personal vehicle for the site visit can obtain a kit with required supplies from an NRCB field office.

Supply kit equipment

- Footwear—rubber footwear or plastic boot covers
- *Protective coveralls*—disposable coveralls
- *Disinfectant*—Virkon STM, or equivalent (with applicator as appropriate); for winter operations, up to 20 percent of the volume of water can be replaced with monopropylene glycol (MPG) in order to reduce the solution's freezing point
- *Disinfecting wipes or hand sanitizer*—for cleaning surfaces, hands, etc.
- *Boot brush and detergent*—for cleaning footwear and equipment before disinfecting
- *Wash pan*—for boot and equipment washing
- *Disposable gloves*—as an alternative to hand washing or the use of hand sanitizer
- *Plastic bags or container*—to contain used protective wear for disposal (or later cleaning if not disposable)
- *Water jug with potable water or a purchased bottle of water*—for footwear and equipment washing. Winter operations may require an alternative way to wash and clean footwear and equipment
- *Disinfectant spray bottle or spray top*—for sanitizing vehicle wheels, wheel wells, and areas where manure or organic material may accumulate
- *Disposable vehicle floor mat covers*
- *Biosecurity log book*

Contact the Natural Resources Conservation Board at the following offices. Dial 310.0000 to be connected toll free.

Edmonton Office

4th Floor, Sterling Place
9940 - 106 Street
Edmonton AB T5K 2N2
T 780-422-1977

Airdrie Office

Airdrie Agriculture Regional Centre
97 East Lake Ramp NE
Airdrie AB T4A 0C3
T 403-340-5241

Lethbridge Office

Agriculture Centre
100, 5401 - 1 Avenue S
Lethbridge AB T1J 4V6
T 403-381-5166

Morinville Office

Provincial Building
201, 10008 - 107 Street
Morinville AB T8R 1L3
T 780-939-1212

Red Deer Office

Provincial Building
303, 4920 - 51 Street
Red Deer AB T4N 6K8
T 403-340-5241

NRCB Reporting Line: 1.866.383.6722

Email: info@nrcb.ca

Web address: www.nrcb.ca

Copies of the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* can be obtained from the Queen's Printer at www.qp.gov.ab.ca or through the NRCB website.

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