

# Ontario Fair Biosecurity



# Biosecurity at Ontario's Fairs

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## Executive Summary

The livestock and poultry exhibitions at fairs across the country inherently conduct higher risk activities by bringing multiple species of animals and people together at a single concentrated location. With on-site signage and hand-washing stations, fairs have generally addressed some of the potential risks of contact between fair visitors and the livestock displays; the importance of addressing the risks of transfer of disease between and among livestock populations by contact at fairs and the transfer of zoonotic disease between livestock and the public is now a priority.

This project was undertaken by the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies (OAAS) to help member fairs modify and improve their approach to biosecurity through the development and implementation of protocols at fairs and educational messages for the exhibitors of poultry and livestock.

The intended outcome of the project is to allow agricultural fairs the ability to invite poultry, livestock and the public to come together and interact in a manner more likely to minimize the potential for the spread of disease-causing pathogens. Any time birds, animals and people move from place to place there is an increased risk of the spread of pathogens and disease. Animal-to-animal transfer, bird-to-bird transfer and the potential transfer of zoonotic disease to people are all risks to the fairs, if educational and procedural measures are not put in place and followed. New materials developed by the project team will offer Ontario Fairs an opportunity to ensure that the appropriate biosecurity protocols and messages are put in place.

The project involved gathering information from fair operators and exhibitors by using a biosecurity survey, focus groups and one-on-one interviews. Existing biosecurity practices in use at fairs were identified and assessed, and potential gaps were investigated. In addition, a comprehensive review of biosecurity resources was conducted to locate and make available information and resources that individual fairs could use to enhance their biosecurity activities.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) recently released Canadian On-Farm National Biosecurity Standards were reviewed. Some of these Standards provide specific guidance to farmers about attendance at fairs. However, the Ontario fair environment is quite different from on-farm livestock management, and potentially much more complex; for example, the types of species present at Ontario's fairs include most species of farmed livestock and poultry and several exotic rare breed fancy birds, circus animals and exotics like snakes and reptiles, plus dog and cat shows. Also, risks

presented by movement onto and off the grounds, and housing, feed and maintenance of livestock and poultry while at the fair are concentrated, frequent and varied.

The project team identified areas for improvement to ensure that fairs, exhibitors and visitors interact, coexist with the birds and animals in a biosecure manner, and maximize opportunities to minimize the risk of introducing or transferring disease. These areas for improvement can be managed by the fair, the exhibitors and the patrons at three points in time: by the fair and exhibitors before the fair begins and prior to the arrival of any animals; during the fair; and at departure from the fair and return to the farm. The steps to be taken are:

1. Set up a fair biosecurity committee and/or a biosecurity champion to take on the responsibility for making biosecurity recommendations for your fair;
2. Work to inform exhibitors of your fair's biosecurity expectations by sharing biosecurity messages via the OAAS fair exhibitor biosecurity brochure or by incorporating key messages or biosecurity requirements in the fairs registration guide;
3. In addition to providing hand washing stations, consider helping keep footwear and boots clean by providing boot brushes and disinfectant at doorways to buildings or exhibit entry and exit points;
4. Conduct a thorough cleaning and disinfection of all buildings and equipment to ensure the environment is free from any contamination prior to livestock and poultry arriving at the fair;
5. At least once a year, conduct a review of your fair's approach to biosecurity to identify areas for improvement and opportunities to enhance your fair's biosecurity program;
6. Ensure that all poultry and livestock are provided adequate space, ventilation, feed, water and bedding to minimize their stress during the fair; and
7. Ensure that all manure and any unused feed and bedding are properly disposed of at the end of the fair, to reduce the risk of any potential contamination from its moving off the fairgrounds.

The services of a veterinarian can play a key role in the development and implementation of a fair's biosecurity protocols. There is certainly opportunity to work more closely with the veterinary community to identify and coordinate specific areas for

improvement in biosecurity at fairs. The OAAS may also consider following the trail blazed by commercial agriculture and look to work with the Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions (CAFÉ) and other provincial fair organizations to submit an application to the CFIA Office of Animal Biosecurity to develop voluntary national fair biosecurity standards.

Investment in this project has been provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the Canadian Agricultural Adaptation Program (CAAP). In Ontario, this program is delivered by the Agricultural Adaptation Council



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## Fair Biosecurity Tool and Resource Guide

This “*how to guide*” is designed to assist fair operators across Ontario with the preparation of biosecurity plans for their fair operations. Implementation of biosecurity practices helps reduce the risk of infectious disease transfer and better protects your fair, your exhibitors, including their poultry and livestock, and the millions of patrons that attend Ontario Fairs every year. In addition, improved fair biosecurity assists in protecting the agriculture industry’s economic well-being and can protect everyone, including your fair’s staff and volunteers, from the potential introduction and spread of zoonotic disease.

It is expected that through use of the Fair Biosecurity Planning Tool and this Resource Guide, that all member fairs will be encouraged to adopt a more consistent biosecurity program. Ontario Fairs already include biosecurity practices in their day-to-day fair operations to reduce the risk of disease transfer and a more consistent approach to biosecurity will provide greater province-wide confidence among fair operators and exhibitors.

A sensible approach to the implementation of biosecurity at fairs and the realities of cost vs. benefit, practicality and enforceability must be considered. Fairs are encouraged to prepare biosecurity plans that are specific to their own fair operations. Although the principles of biosecurity are universal, what works well in one location may not be the solution at another fair.

The approach of seeking biosecurity benefits through improved facility and sanitation management, better animal health and welfare management, and coordinated biosecurity activities by fairs, exhibitors and visitors provides a stable foundation to build upon. Many of the existing on-farm biosecurity programs, including the new Canadian National Biosecurity Standards, have taken a similar approach.

The concepts of this approach are in part based on a comprehensive review of existing biosecurity materials from North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, and a detailed review of fairs’ practices in Ontario.

The Fair Biosecurity Planning Tool reviews biosecurity activities and protocols that occur prior to, during and at the closing of the fair.” The tool is designed to ask biosecurity-related questions that will result in the fair’s being able to identify areas for improvement and inclusion into its biosecurity program. In addition to identifying specific biosecurity activities, the tool sets out the supporting rationale for the fair to consider when making its decisions.

The Resource Guide may be used before or after completion of the Fair Biosecurity Planning Tool. The guide will educate the fair biosecurity committee or voluntary biosecurity point person and equip them to tackle the task of building their fair’s biosecurity program and written protocols. By documenting the answers to the questions in the biosecurity tool, the fair will have its own activity-based biosecurity program. The spreadsheet in the guide is structured to allow users to access a hyperlink in each row to the specific websites with materials relating to a particular column topic. The topics are selected based on the identified value derived from the biosecurity activity.

The Biosecurity Tool can be used to identify areas for improvement and the web links and references in the guide are available to learn more about biosecurity as it relates to a particular specific topic.

The biosecurity documents for use by the fairs, working together with the brochure for the exhibitors allows the two groups to simultaneously address biosecurity improvements as opportunities become available, like new building construction, changes to traffic flow, changes to facility use or fairground layout.

The OAAS requests that anyone seeking more information about biosecurity at Ontario Fairs contact:

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## Ontario Fair Biosecurity Activity Planning Tool

Biosecurity Activity includes facilities, equipment and measures that assist in preventing the introduction or spread of animal and zoonotic diseases at the fair. After each question below, supporting rationale is provided **in bold text**, and the Fair Biosecurity Resource Guide, available on the OAAS website, provides additional details and ideas.

<b>Biosecurity Activity Self-Assessment</b>	Y = Yes, S = Sometimes, N = No, N/A = Not Applicable			
Please read and fairly answer each question by checking a box to the right. Use the notes in <b>bold text</b> for reference and context.	Y	S	N	N/A
1. Does the fair ensure that all poultry and livestock exhibition buildings and areas are free of all organic material and have been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected prior to the start of the fair? <b>Thorough cleaning and disinfection of all poultry and livestock exhibition buildings (and the associated record keeping) by the fair prior to arrival of poultry and livestock shows due diligence by the fair and reduces the risk of transfer of contamination via buildings or equipment.</b>				
2. Do you send biosecurity information to exhibitors prior to their arrival at the fair? <b>Biosecurity information could be included on the fair registration card and could provide reminders to exhibitors relating to animal health, cleaning and disinfection of vehicles and equipment, waste handling, water availability, use of clean bedding, wash areas and post show quarantine.</b>				
3. Do you ensure that exhibitors are aware of your fair's biosecurity protocols prior to, or upon arrival at the fair? <b>Biosecurity is a combination of facilities and protocols designed to minimize disease introduction and spread; it is important for exhibitors to be fully informed of what the approach to biosecurity will be at each fair. All fairs considering expansion of their biosecurity efforts should do their best to set out expectations of</b>				

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<b>exhibitors prior to their arrival.</b>				
4. Do you have the ability to control entry to the fairgrounds by exhibitors and their animals/birds via the use of fences and gates? <b>Contact by fair staff and/or trained volunteers with arriving exhibitors allows for all arrival activities including record keeping, information exchange, visual inspection of cleanliness of the transport vehicle to be undertaken.</b>				
5. Do you ensure cleanliness of the following, upon arrival at the fair? <b>Assuming contact at arrival, fair staff and/or trained volunteers have the opportunity to request that corrective action take place if a potential biosecurity problem is identified at that time. Fixing the problem before the vehicle, animals/birds, or the exhibitor and his equipment and supplies commingle with others on the fairgrounds.</b>				
a. Animals/Birds				
b. Exhibitors and their Equipment				
c. Vehicles and Trailers				
6. Is a dedicated parking area set aside for animal transport vehicles and trailers and is signage posted on the fair site clearly indicating where the vehicles should be parked? <b>Livestock transport vehicles and equipment are a potential source of disease pathogens that could be transmitted to other animals. Controlling where the transport vehicles park could help the fair manage and reduce this risk.</b>				
7. Is a logbook or record-keeping system in place to record the name, date and contact information of attending exhibitors, their livestock and poultry, and service personnel? <b>A record-keeping or traceability system allows the fair to immediately contact and communicate with registered exhibitors in the event that animal health information needs to be traced, tracked or shared.</b>				
8. Does the fair make a wash facility available? <b>Many exhibitors will wash and bathe their animals at some point during the fair. Dedicated, properly equipped and well-maintained</b>				

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<b>wash areas allow the fair to control the management of waste and run-off at these locations to reduce the introduction and spread of pathogens.</b>				
9. Does the fair have a person on site that is familiar with and able to recognize the symptoms of animal illness or disease? <b>It would be optimum to have a veterinarian inspect all poultry and animals on display before the fair begins; however, this could be costly and impractical. The fair should at least have a person(s) view all displays to identify any signs of disease, excess stress or illness amongst the participating animals.</b>				
10. Do you exclude animals showing symptoms of a disease? <b>The fair should advise all participants that any poultry or animal showing signs of disease are prohibited. In addition, a plan and facilities should be available to provide temporary isolation of diseased stock.</b>				
11. Do the fairs facilities assist to prevent or minimize nose-to-nose or direct contact between birds and animals from different farms? <b>Direct contact between animals in adjacent pens, or between pens and alleys during movement of the animals, is a high-risk activity for transmission of disease pathogens between animals/birds. Limiting opportunities for such direct contact will reduce the risk.</b>				
12. Does the fair have a protocol for the management of manure? <b>Manure is a common environment for disease pathogens. A manure management protocol allows all users to deal with and dispose of manure in a manner that reduces the risk of transmission and spread of diseases on-site.</b>				
13. Are the tools and equipment used by fair personnel for the following activities designated solely for these purposes? <b>If the fair is involved in any way in handling feed, manure or bedding, it must ensure that either dedicated equipment is used for each activity or there is a protocol to thoroughly clean and disinfect the equipment between uses.</b>				
a. Handling feed?				
b. Handling bedding?				
c. Handling manure?				

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<p>14. Do you provide any equipment for shared use by exhibitors or does the fair require that they bring their own?  <b>Equipment that has been contaminated with disease pathogens is a vector for disease transmission. It is crucial that any shared equipment be cleaned and disinfected between users.</b></p>				
<p>15. Which of the following equipment does the fair make available to exhibitors and patrons?  <b>All of the equipment listed below can be beneficial to increasing biosecurity and reducing the risk of disease transmission; however, the proper monitoring, cleaning, replenishment and maintenance of these items are paramount. Clean and disinfect the equipment according to a pre-determined schedule and according to manufacturers' instructions.</b></p>				
a) Hand washing stations				
b) Water, soap and hand towels				
c) Disinfectant hand wash				
d) Disinfectant doorway mats, boot brushes				
e) Animal or vehicle wash area				
<p>16. Do you ensure that feed and water are stored and provided in a manner to minimize contamination?  <b>Contaminated water or feed could spread diseases and adversely affect animal health. The fair should remind exhibitors to handle feed and water equipment in a way that will minimize the potential for contamination and ensure that potable water is available for poultry and livestock</b></p>				
<p>17. Does the fair conduct an annual water analysis?  <b>The fair should ensure that tests are conducted of water from all available water sources and keep a record of the results on file. In the event that non-tested water is made available, users should be notified by on-site signage.</b></p>				
<p>18. Are dead animals removed immediately and disposed of in an approved manner (licensed collector, bury or compost according to provincial guidelines, etc.)?</p>				

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<b>In addition to adverse public image issues, dead animals are a potential source of contamination. All exhibitors should be made aware of the fair’s expectations relating to the immediate removal and proper disposal of at-fair mortalities.</b>				
19. Do you have a vehicle/trailer clean up or wash area for use by exhibitors before they depart the fairgrounds? <b>Any exhibitor that has adopted biosecurity best practices will want to return to their home farm with a clean and disinfected transport vehicle. If the fair has space and facilities, a vehicle wash area would be beneficial to enable and encourage this activity.</b>				
20. Does your fair have and follow an animal health and welfare program?				
a) If yes, does it include biosecurity activities?				
b) If yes, do you review your animal health program regularly with your veterinarian?				
21. Has your fair implemented a pest control program for wild birds and rodents? <b>Wild birds and rodents are potentially a direct source of contamination and a pest control program aids in reducing this risk.</b>				
22. Is the introduction and consumption of food prohibited within the poultry, livestock and animal display areas? <b>A common general practice is to discourage visitors from consuming food, or feeding “people food” to the animals. The risk of zoonotic disease transmission increases when human-to-animal and hand-to-mouth contact occurs.</b>				
23. Do you ensure that pets are prohibited from moving between poultry and livestock exhibition areas and buildings? <b>Preventing dogs from moving between exhibition areas reduces the risk of moving contamination.</b>				
24. Does the fair coordinate biosecurity activities with the exhibitor if there is there a petting zoo at the fair? <b>The Fair and the exhibitor should mutually agree to animal health, welfare and biosecurity management. This exhibitor is likely to travel to other fairs and events and additional attention paid to biosecurity is advisable given the amount of direct contact with patrons.</b>				

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<p>25. Does the fair provide an area or equipment for those attendees who inadvertently contaminate their footwear with manure to clean their boots or shoes?</p> <p><b>Contaminated footwear is a major route of disease transmission from place to place or from animal to animal. The fair could provide boot brushes, disinfection mats, boot baths or cleaning stations to help reduce this risk point. (It should be noted that the cleanliness and maintenance of this equipment is paramount; otherwise, such a station could actually increase the risk of transmission and spread. (Ongoing monitoring, maintenance and record-keeping should be carried out at these stations.)</b></p>				
<p>26. Are garbage cans with lids available for use by exhibitors to allow for proper waste disposal?</p> <p><b>Improper disposal of livestock and poultry exhibitor garbage could increase the risk of transmission and spread of diseases on-site.</b></p>				
<p>27. Does the fair immediately clean and disinfect the pens, cages, corrals, buildings and any other equipment at the end of the show?</p> <p><b>Many disease pathogens can survive in organic material for long periods of time even in, and sometimes particularly in, colder conditions. Cleaning and disinfection at the close of a fair reduces the risk that pathogens will be found on the fair facilities at next year's fair.</b></p>				
<p>28. Do the fair's staff and/or committees meet after the fair to review the biosecurity provisions and make adjustments for following years?</p> <p><b>A country proverb says, "There's no education in the second kick of a mule." Any incidents or problems that might have occurred during the fair will be fresh in staff/volunteers' minds and soon after the closing of the fair is an ideal time to put better practices in place. Exhibitors will also be pleased to hear about any changes that are planned to protect the health of their livestock and poultry at next year's fair.</b></p>				
<p>29. Does the fair lend or borrow any equipment, pens, cages or corrals with any other local fairs?</p> <p><b>Due to the fact that many disease pathogens can survive in organic material for long periods of time, thorough cleaning and disinfection of lent or borrowed items should occur prior to the movement between fairs</b></p>				

After completing the survey, you may use the following approach to interpret your answers. and get ideas for your fair's biosecurity improvements:

**YES** - For all "yes" responses, the fair board can generally feel satisfied that they have considered an opportunity to gain a benefit from that component of their biosecurity program. To ensure that the maximum benefit is received, coordination of some activities is important.

"Yes" answers should be reviewed again anytime enhancements, improvements or changes are made. This additional review will assist in integrating and coordinating existing biosecurity activities with the new.

**SOMETIMES** - For all of "sometimes" responses, determine if implementing a standard operating protocol for that type of activity is possible at your fair. A "sometimes" answer to a biosecurity activity on the planning tool self-assessment will rarely consistently deliver on the intended outcome as most biosecurity activities are conducted in the context of a regularly scheduled, standardized activity (i.e. a standard operating protocol).

**NO** - For any "no" answers, the fair may look at these activities for opportunities to improve their fair's biosecurity or enhance their practices and these could become the priority activities for implementation.

Finally, take a walk around the fair area, barns and buildings to ensure that the facility and the biosecurity practices complement each other. Look for opportunities to implement biosecurity by changing the way you work with your existing space and facilities.

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