

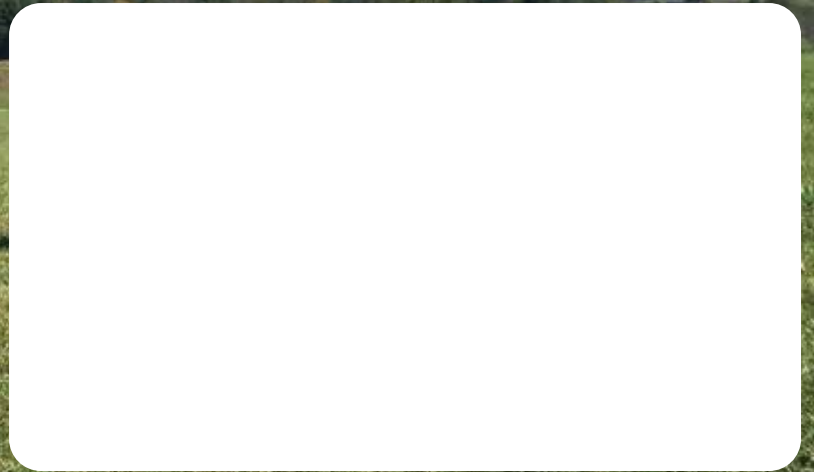
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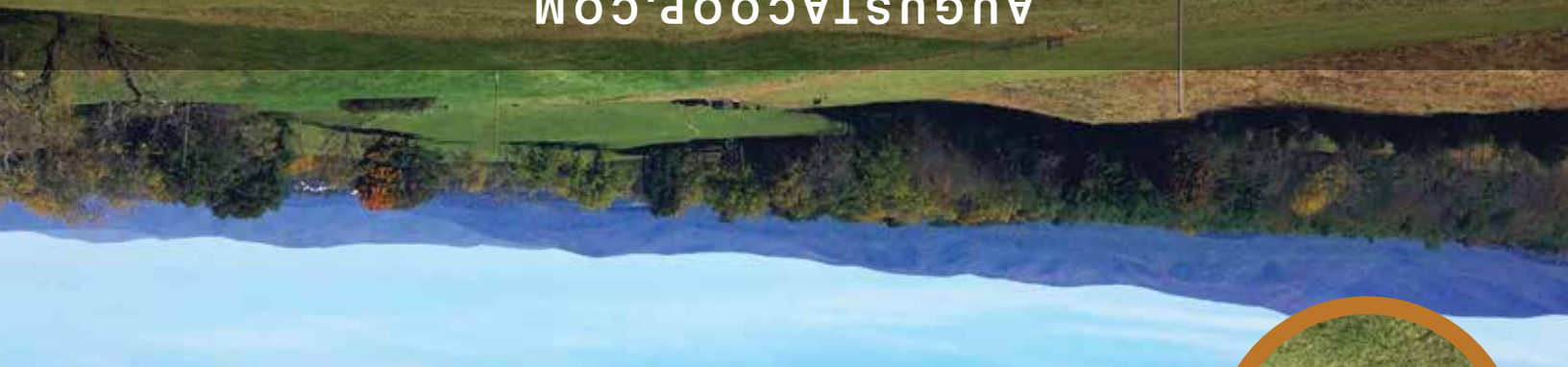
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AGRONOMY & BEEF BULLETIN
February 2021



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SINCE

7 STEPS TO CREATE A BIOSECURITY PLAN

No matter what type of livestock operation you run, biosecurity should always be at the forefront of your mind. Putting biosecurity protocols in place can help reduce the risk of disease being transferred to not only livestock, but to humans as well.

According to Joe Armstrong, DVM, University of Minnesota Extension cattle production systems educator, having a biosecurity plan can help protect your farm from external pathogens and can minimize the transmission of diseases on your operation. To build a biosecurity plan for your farm, Armstrong provides these seven steps.

1. DETERMINE YOUR GOAL.

Before you can develop your plan, it is important to determine your end goal. You can't get to where you are wanting to go unless you know where you are at. To do this, Armstrong suggests asking yourself two questions:

- Is there a specific disease that you are looking to target that you already have?
- Is there a particular disease you are worried about acquiring?

If you don't know the answers to these questions, that's okay. Reach out to your veterinarian for help.

2. DEVELOP YOUR TEAM.

One of the most valuable members to have on your farm's team is your veterinarian. When formulating your biosecurity plan, be sure to include them in on the discussion.

"Your veterinarian is one of the only people you work with that can comment on your entire system and how everything works together," Armstrong says. "They have specific biosecurity training that can help you develop a plan that targets your most significant transmission risks."

3. FORMULATE THE PLAN.

As you begin to write down your farm's intentions, it is crucial that you be as specific as possible. No matter how simple a protocol may be, you still need to have it in writing. Armstrong suggests creating visible materials that can serve as a reminder to you and your staff.

4. GET EVERYONE ON BOARD.

"Biosecurity only works if everyone follows the protocols," Armstrong says. "One person that isn't on board can derail the whole thing. Make sure everyone understands what to do and make sure everyone understands why it is important."

Consider having a team meeting to go over the new protocols and ask employees for their suggestions and feedback.

5. START THE PLAN.

Now that the plan has been given the green light, it's time to put it in action.

"The sooner it is in place, the sooner you can refine the protocols and identify problem areas that need to be resolved," Armstrong says.

6. FINE TUNE.

Because of workforce turnover and changing conditions on dairy farms, biosecurity training needs to be on-going and continually reinforced. It may be helpful to ask your veterinarian to attend these training sessions to answer some of the questions your team members might have.

7. EVALUATE AND MAKE ADJUSTMENTS.

One of the most important steps in formulating a biosecurity plan is to make adjustments as necessary. Be sure to record incidences of diseases to help measure whether your plan is working or not.

"If your plan has been given enough time to work, you can decide if you need to change your plan based on your evaluation," Armstrong says.

SOLVING SPRING'S BIGGEST CHALLENGES

CHALLENGE #1: FLY CONTROL

Flies can be tricky, especially as spring turns to summer. One way to effectively combat horn flies is to use a feed-through fly control, which can be found in certain cattle minerals.

Once a cow consumes a fly control mineral, it functions through the manure the cow excretes. Insect growth regulator (IGR) passes through the cow and into the manure where horn flies lay their eggs. IGR breaks the horn fly lifecycle in the manure by preventing pupae from developing into biting adult flies.

The key to season-long fly control is starting early. Offer fly control mineral 30 days before the last frost in the spring. This rule of thumb ensures cows consume IGR before horn flies appear and multiply. Continue feeding fly control mineral for 30 days after the first frost in the fall to prevent horn flies from overwintering.

CHALLENGE #2: COWS BREEDING BACK

A big factor in spring breeding success is a cow's body condition score (BCS) when she calves. To support rebreeding, target mature cows to calve at a BCS 6.

If cows aren't in BCS 6 at calving, you're playing catch-up after the fact. The catch-up approach often means it's too late to impact the current breeding cycle.

It's never too late to focus on the next breeding season.

The period from weaning to about 90 days before calving is the best time to pay close attention to BCS and your nutrition program. At three months prior to calving, it's hard to add condition economically.

CHALLENGE #3: GRASS TETANY

Cattle are at their greatest risk of grass tetany in spring when conditions typically include cloudy skies, cool soil and lush quickly growing cool-season grasses. Luckily, grass tetany is preventable, and you can implement strategies to help manage your risk.

Feeding magnesium supplements can help address magnesium deficiencies associated with lush spring grass. Offer high-magnesium mineral two to three weeks before cattle are first exposed to lush grass to achieve consistent intake before the time of highest risk. Continue feeding for 60 days after the first sign of grass growth.

Another strategy to manage risk includes grazing less susceptible young cows on the highest risk pastures and holding older lactating cows off pasture until grasses are four to six inches tall.

CHALLENGE #4: GRASS QUALITY OR QUANTITY

It's easy to get excited about a little bit of green grass in the spring, but there may not be enough volume to support a cow's increasing requirements. Cows will run for green grass and burn more energy searching for grass than what they'll consume. The energy deficit can result in lost body condition.

Provide your cows free-choice hay and supplement early until grass is lush and plentiful. Offer hay and continue feeding it long enough for cows to achieve a BCS 6 at calving and no less than a BCS 5.5 at breeding.

Complement hay with a self-fed supplement containing intake control properties, which allows cattle to decide if they need additional energy and protein. Cows won't consume much supplement if forage is meeting their requirements and will consume more supplement if forage is not.

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MEET ALEX BOTKIN

Agronomy Field Representative – Augusta & Rockbridge Counties

ABotkin@AugustaCoop.com

Alex grew up in Fort Defiance, VA. He graduated from Virginia Tech in 2019. While in school, he worked for the Virginia Tech Agronomy Farm. Following this he interned at the Shenandoah Valley Agriculture Research Center. In June 2019, he started at Augusta Cooperative Farm Bureau as a manager trainee and made his way to Agronomy Field Representative.

Currently, as an Agronomy Field Representative, Alex performs many tasks, including crop scouting, crop recommendations, hay and pasture management recommendations, customer service and much more.



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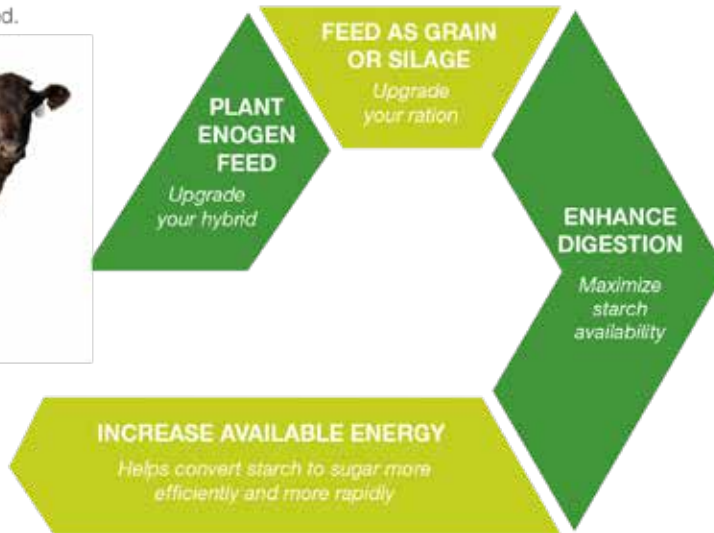
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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT THE AUGUSTA CO-OP AGRONOMY TEAM

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