

# ALBERTA SheepSmart

RESOURCES FOR PRODUCERS

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## On-Farm Biosecurity: An ounce of prevention

*Every farm has existing biosecurity practices that can be built upon in stages. A biosecurity plan does not need to be high-tech, complicated or expensive to be effective.*

### What is an on-farm biosecurity plan?

An on-farm biosecurity plan includes the day-to-day management practices used to prevent diseases from:

- Being introduced to your flock
- Spreading within your flock
- Spreading to other farms from your flock

### Why is biosecurity important?

*Controlling the spread of infectious sheep diseases benefits individual producers and the sheep industry as a whole.*

Benefits to your flock	Benefits to your industry
Increased productivity and profitability (e.g., decreased feed to gain ratio, fewer condemned carcasses, improved reproductive outcomes)	Reduced chance of a catastrophic outcome due to an outbreak of a foreign animal disease (e.g., Foot and Mouth Disease)
Decreased veterinary drug use and time spent treating animals	Increased export market opportunities
Improved animal welfare	Increased consumer confidence
Reduced chance of farm worker exposure to zoonotic diseases	Greater financial security for all involved in the sheep industry

### How are infectious diseases spread?

Infectious diseases are caused by pathogens such as bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi that move from an infected animal to non-infected animals. Pathogens reproduce in an infected animal's body and are shed through saliva, feces, urine, milk, respiratory (nasal, aerosol) and reproductive (semen, vaginal, placental) secretions. Infected animals may or may not show signs of the disease they are carrying, but will transmit pathogens to other animals through:

**Direct contact:** non-infected animals are exposed to pathogens by contact with infected animals

#### AND

**Indirect contact:** non-infected animals are exposed to pathogens carried on contaminated equipment (e.g., feeding equipment, hoof trimmers, shearing equipment, needles), on people (e.g., boots, clothing) or through vectors such as insects and pests.

## What management practices should be included in a biosecurity plan?

Management practices that reduce contact with pathogens can be grouped by four basic principles.

Principle	Includes management practices that...
Animal Health Management	Minimize the health risks to your flock from animals of unknown health. Some examples are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gaining knowledge of what diseases are of importance to your flock</li><li>• Limiting exposure to sheep of unknown health status (e.g., isolate new, returning and sick animals, limit access to neighbouring flocks, and take care sourcing new stock)</li><li>• Limiting access to other species and monitoring the health of working animals</li></ul>
Record Keeping	Validate flock health status and help prepare for unforeseen events. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Biosecurity records, including those maintained for monitoring productivity, track the health status of a flock.</li><li>• Response plans help ensure health problems are caught early and that clear guidelines are in place if a disease outbreak occurs.</li></ul>
Farm, Facilities, Equipment	Minimize the effect that farm layout, facilities and equipment have on the spread of disease. Some examples are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assessing existing facilities to identify areas of risk and organize farm layout and chore order to decrease risk of disease spread</li><li>• Ensuring veterinary, shearing and feeding equipment are effectively cleaned</li></ul>
People	Minimize the risk to flock health by all individuals entering your farm. Some examples are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assessing the risk various visitors pose to flock health</li><li>• Maintaining a record of visitors</li><li>• Training staff to understand importance of biosecurity</li></ul>

### This looks like a lot of work - Is it worthwhile?

Every farm has existing biosecurity practices that can be built upon in stages. A biosecurity plan does not need to be high-tech, complicated or expensive to be effective. Even relatively small changes, such as the order in which pens are fed or handled, are beneficial. Avoiding the expense of a major disease outbreak or the incremental, but significant, losses due to common diseases truly makes an ounce of prevention worth a pound of cure.

### Is there help available?

Voluntary guidelines, such as the new National Sheep On-Farm Biosecurity Standard and Planning Guide or the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association biosecurity booklet, provide step-by-step procedures to help producers design biosecurity plans that fit with their operations. These guides include self-assessments to look at your operation in detail and identify where changes are needed.

Your flock veterinarian is a vital resource for tailoring your biosecurity plan to address diseases of greatest concern to your flock.

For copies of the guidelines, visit the ALP website at [www.ablamb.ca/producer\\_mgmt/biosecurity.html](http://www.ablamb.ca/producer_mgmt/biosecurity.html).

For biosecurity grant opportunities visit [www.growingforward.alberta.ca](http://www.growingforward.alberta.ca).



*The National Sheep On-Farm Biosecurity Standard*



*Biosecurity Principles and Best Practices for Alberta Lamb Producers*

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