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Target Audience
All Inspectors in Agriculture

BIOSECURITY: GUIDANCE FOR INSPECTORS WHO VISIT FARM PREMISES

This SIM is guidance on biosecurity for officials who visit farm premises.
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INTRODUCTION

1 The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has issued guidance on biosecurity for officials who visit farm premises. The DEFRA code is not mandatory and it is accepted that there may be circumstances where compliance is not possible. Nevertheless the standards within the code represent and will inevitably be seen as 'best practice'.

2 HSE's Field Operations Directorate (FOD) has taken the code as the basis for future biosecurity measures to be followed by inspectors in agriculture groups who inspect or access farm premises and land during the course of their work. Staff in other directorates in HSE who require access to or across farm land in discharging their statutory functions will need to consider whether and the extent to which they need to comply with DEFRA's guidelines.

3 'Biosecurity' means a series of measures and protocols designed to prevent potentially harmful biological agents (horticultural, animal or zoonotic) from entering or leaving a property. The measures include:

- (1) the cleaning and disinfection of clothing, equipment and vehicles, etc; and
- (2) working protocols designed to minimise movements, contact and therefore potential contamination of all people, vehicles and equipment used.

4 Inspectors who visit or access farm premises during the course of inspection and who fail to carry out appropriate biosecurity measures on entering and leaving the farm run the risk of spreading plant or animal diseases to or from that premises.

5 'Appropriate' biosecurity measures depend on the risk associated with the visit. Factors that determine the level of risk include:

(1) the type of farm - arable, livestock, mixed, horticultural, etc;

(2) any restrictions applying to the farm - animal or plant health;

(3) any restrictions applying to the area, eg Restricted Infected Areas/ Infected Areas under Foot-and-mouth Disease Orders, etc;

(4) the extent and reason for the visit, eg to the farmhouse to examine records; on farm inspection of premises and equipment, on-farm inspection requiring close, intimate contact with livestock, land inspection, etc.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

6 The principles set out below are supplemented by the following appendices, which give additional information on the precautions to be followed by FOD inspectors in agriculture groups when visiting particular types of farm premises:

Appendix 1 - Arable farms

Appendix 2 - Livestock farms in the absence of an outbreak of notifiable disease

Appendix 3 - Livestock farms following confirmation of an outbreak of notifiable disease

Appendix 4 - Premises under specific animal disease restrictions.

7 Until further notice:

(1) suitable and sufficient supplies of disinfectant, equipment for its use (see **Appendix 6**) and appropriate PPE will be issued to inspectors and should be kept readily available for use when visiting farm premises.

(2) where appropriate and practicable, farm visits should be made following prior contact with the owner/farm manager. The opportunity should be taken to check what biosecurity arrangements (if any) are in place, whether you may use them and arrangements for parking;

(3) wherever possible, vehicles should be parked off farm. If there is no alternative, vehicles taken onto a farm should be parked, wherever possible,

on hard standing away from livestock. Vehicles should not normally be taken into areas to which livestock have access;

(4) vehicles taken onto a farm should be visibly free of animal excreta, slurry, etc. Before leaving the farm all visible contamination, eg excreta, slurry or similar material should be cleaned from the outside of the vehicle which should be disinfected using on-farm facilities. If exceptionally this is not possible, the vehicle should be cleaned before being taken onto another farm with livestock, either before the next visit or, if appropriate, at the end of the working day.

(5) the precautions detailed in Appendices 1-4 are based on the assumption that inspectors should **not** normally:

(a) come into close and intimate contact with susceptible livestock; and

(b) enter an arable crop other than by a public right of way;

(6) suitable protective clothing should be worn on all farm visits. Where the only likely contamination is to footwear then protective clothing, other than boots, is not required; but inspectors should refer to the relevant appendix for further details. The purpose of protective clothing is to prevent any contamination being carried from farm to farm;

(7) disposable overalls should only be used once. After first seeking the farmer's permission, they should then be left on the farm for disposal.;

(8) boots and waterproof clothing (if used) must be cleaned and disinfected before entering and, where possible, leaving the farm;

(9) if standard issue overalls are used they should not be used again until laundered;

(10) records of visits to farms should be made in the normal way using **Form IRF1** and entered onto COIN; and

(11) where it is necessary to visit farms under specific restrictions, eg to investigate fatal or major injury accidents, reported cases of zoonoses or complaints which can only be investigated by site visit, authority must first be obtained from DEFRA's Divisional Veterinary Manager (see also **Appendices 3 and 4**).

FURTHER ADVICE

8 The Agriculture & Food Sector will monitor and advise operational Bands 1/2 of any central guidance on animal disease control measures issued by the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) in respect of farm visits. For example, with Foot-and-Mouth Disease, this would invariably mean that non-essential visits must not take place to farm premises within **Infected Areas** or **Restricted Infected Areas**. Under certain circumstances a ban on non-essential visits may be extended to premises within a **Controlled Area**.

9 If a notifiable disease has been confirmed by the CVO and an **Infected** or **Restricted Infected Area** has been declared the status and extent of the area should be checked on the DEFRA website. The restricted status of an individual farm or premises can be checked with the local Animal Health Divisional Office before a visit takes place.

10 When visits to premises can be resumed in specified areas, an official can visit any farm that is not subject to restrictions provided appropriate biosecurity measures are taken. The measures are in Appendices 1-3.

NOTIFIABLE diseases RESTRICTIONS

11 See **Appendix 5** for types of restrictions in the event of notifiable diseases.

DISINFECTION Procedures

12 For guidance on disinfection procedures see **Appendix 6**.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

13 For guidance on health and safety issues see **Appendix 7**.

Date first issued: 16 August 2002

APPENDIX 1
(paras 6, 7(5) and 10)

PRECAUTIONS TO BE FOLLOWED WHEN VISITING ARABLE FARMS

Introduction

1 'Arable farm' means:

(1) farm premises that have been free of domesticated animals susceptible to notifiable disease for the four weeks preceding the visit. NB: Includes any such animals kept as pets;

(2) farm premises that do not intend introducing susceptible animals in the four week period following the visit; and

(3) parts of the farm to be visited that have not been treated with manure or other products from susceptible animals during the four weeks preceding the visit.

Risk assessment

2 The risk is to plant health. Soil-inhabiting fungi and nematodes are readily spread by soil carried on footwear, car tyres, etc and small insects, mites, fungi and some viruses can be distributed on clothing. Visits to such premises are deemed to be low risk.

3 Even where the risk is negligible farmers may perceive a risk from inspectors who may have visited other sites. Inspectors should be sensitive to that perception, be seen to be taking the above precautions and comply with any reasonable requests from a farmer for additional measures. Plant hygiene precautions may determine the sequence of visits.

4 Further advice in relation to specific plant health situations can be obtained from the DEFRA Plant Health and Seeds Inspector (PHSI) for the area in question. Details of PHSI locations can be obtained from PHSI (HQ), tel: 01904 455174.

Precautions

5 Inspectors should comply with any notices that refer to quarantine soil-borne pests or diseases. In all other circumstances:

(1) as a minimum, wear suitable footwear, ie boots which should be cleaned immediately before and after the visit with soapy water;

(2) if the presence of a quarantine soil-borne pest or disease is suspected, disinfect boots with an acid-based disinfectant such as Antec Farm Fluid S (2% solution) for 10 minutes before rinsing off;

(3) wherever possible avoid entering arable crops. Keep to headlands and/or public footpaths. If you have to enter an arable crop, wear a disposable overall and dispose of it after use on the farm

(4) avoid crossing any yards, lanes, collection areas or fields that are or have been used by notifiable disease susceptible animals in the previous four weeks.

APPENDIX 2

(paras 6, 7(5), 10, Appendix 3 para 5 and Appendix 4 para 7)

VISIT TO LIVESTOCK FARMS IN THE ABSENCE OF AN OUTBREAK OF NOTIFIABLE ANIMAL DISEASE

Introduction

1 'Livestock farm' means premises where:

(1) notifiable disease susceptible livestock are present as a commercial concern or kept as pets;

(2) such animals were present in the four weeks preceding the visit or will be introduced in the next four weeks; and

(3) the parts of the farm to be visited have been treated with manure or other products from susceptible animals in the preceding 4 weeks.

2 Notifiable disease susceptible livestock include cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, camels, farmed deer, poultry, etc.

Risk assessment

3 The risk of spreading disease varies with the degree of exposure to animals and their products hence the measures required should take into account the nature of the visit. **However, FOD does not normally expect or anticipate that inspectors will normally come into close or intimate contact with livestock. Unnecessary contact with animals should be avoided. Inspectors should neither handle animals nor routinely go into livestock enclosures.**

4 Suitable protective clothing should be worn at all farm visits that involve entering areas where livestock are present or to which they normally have access. The type of protective clothing required depends on the nature the visit, eg the protection required for a visit to a dairy herd would differ from that required for a visit to an extensive unit on moorland.

NB: The purpose of the protective clothing is to prevent any contamination being carried from farm to farm.

Precautions

5 Where the only likely contamination is to footwear, waterproof boots should be worn and additional protective clothing is not required.

6 Take sufficient water, disinfectant and disinfecting equipment on the visit, even if facilities for disinfecting clothes, footwear, equipment or vehicles are thought to be available on the premises.

7 If the visit includes areas where there are livestock, standard issue disposable overalls should be worn but must only be used once and then be properly disposed of on the farm.

8 If, in exceptional cases, an inspector anticipates it is likely they will be handling/ come into close proximity to susceptible animals, standard issue waterproof protective clothing and boots should be worn.

9 With the owner's agreement, disposable overalls should be left on the premises.

APPENDIX 3
(paras 6, 7(5), 7(11) and 10)

VISITS TO LIVESTOCK FARMS WITH ANIMALS SUSCEPTIBLE TO A
NOTIFIABLE DISEASE FOLLOWING THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF AN OUTBREAK
OF THAT DISEASE

Introduction

1 Following the confirmation of an outbreak of a notifiable disease in the UK, visits to farms with susceptible livestock increases the risk that the disease may be spread.

2 The risk of spreading notifiable diseases will be minimised if appropriate biosecurity measures are observed at all times. Farm visits by government officials, including FOD inspectors, may need to be suspended immediately if there is any evidence linking peripatetic farm visits to the spread of a notifiable disease.

Risk assessment

3 Current information on the country's animal disease status can be obtained from the local Animal Health Divisional Office or from the DEFRA website.

4 Full risk assessments for some diseases have been published, eg Veterinary Risk Assessment No 11 (Foot-and-mouth disease) and these too are available on the DEFRA website. The Sector will monitor DEFRA's website and inform operational bands 1/2 of relevant information.

Precautions

5 In addition to the measures in **Appendix 2**, inspectors should, as a minimum, wear disposable overalls and waterproof boots at visits to all farm premises with susceptible animals.

APPENDIX 4
(paras 6, 7(5) and 7(11))

VISITS TO PREMISES UNDER SPECIFIC RESTRICTIONS

Introduction

1 Normally inspectors should not visit any farm premises subject to DEFRA disease control restrictions, eg Form A, modified Form D, Form D, Article 38, etc - see **Appendix 5** for further information on DEFRA restrictions.

2 Where a site visit to farm premises on which animals have been slaughtered for disease control reasons (Form A, Modified Form D) is unavoidable, ie to investigate a fatal or major injury accident, a serious case of zoonoses or a complaint which cannot be investigated by other means, eg the telephone, such visits can only be made with the permission of the local Divisional Veterinary Manager (DVM) who will issue a licence where necessary. DVMs are based at DEFRA's Regional Veterinary Offices, the address and telephone numbers of which have previously been supplied to divisions and can be found on the DEFRA website. See SIM 01/2005/09 for visits to poultry undertakings in the event of an outbreak of avian influenza.

3 Normally DVMs will only authorise on-farm visits providing appropriate biosecurity measures are taken **and** after preliminary cleaning and disinfection of the premises has taken place. In exceptional circumstances such as a fatal accident, inspectors may require access to farm premises under Form A or modified Form D restrictions **before** preliminary cleaning and disinfection has been completed. Again such visits can only be made with the permission of the DVM, under the authority of a licence. The DVM may require the inspector to be accompanied by an officer from the Animal Health Divisional Office, to comply with the conditions in the schedule to the restrictions and/or with any additional requirements of the licence. Inspectors should follow the precautions set out below and particularly note the need to observe relevant 'quarantine periods': which in the case of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) is 72 hours.

NB: Arrangements were made with DVMs during the FMD outbreak to 'fast track' applications for issuing licences and these should be exploited in cases of emergency. If there are any problems in gaining fast track access to premises, Bands 1/2 should bring this to the attention of the Agriculture and Food Sector.

Types of restrictions

4 For further information on types of restriction, using FMD as an example, please refer to **Appendix 5**.

Risk assessment

5 Current information on the country's animal disease status can be obtained from the local Animal Health Divisional Office or from the DEFRA website.

6 Full risk assessments for some diseases have been published, eg Veterinary Risk Assessment No 11 (Foot-and-mouth disease) and these too are available on the DEFRA website. The Sector will monitor DEFRA's website and inform operational bands 1/2 of relevant information.

Precautions

7 In addition to the precautions at **Appendix 2**, inspectors should observe the following requirements:

(1) visit only with the permission of the DVM who will issue a licence where necessary;

(2) in the absence of a specific dispensation from the DVM, wear waterproof protective clothing and waterproof boots at all times;

(3) if the DVM licenses a visit to a restricted premises before preliminary cleaning and disinfection has taken place on that premises the following condition **must** be observed:

(a) after a visit to such premises a specified period must elapse before the inspector comes into direct contact with relevant susceptible animals either in the course of their work or as a consequence of residing on a premises on which such susceptible animals are kept. For FMD the period is 72 hours; and

(b) any additional measures required by the DVM's licence.

APPENDIX 5
(para 11 and Appendix 4 paras 1 and 4)

TYPES OF RESTRICTIONS IN THE EVENT OF NOTIFIABLE DISEASES

1 By way of illustration, the following restrictions were imposed during the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in 2001. Restrictions were imposed by DEFRA's DVMs through the issue of:

(1) **Form A** - Any premises where an affected or suspected animal was found or it was suspected that FMD was present was served with a Form A Notice declaring it to be an **Infected Place/Premises**;

(2) individual farm premises or parts of farm premises where animals were slaughtered for disease control reasons were placed under Form A or Modified Form D restrictions. The restrictions remained in place until the premises had been fully cleaned and disinfected and either restocked with sentinel animals or left standing for the required period;

(3) **Restricted Infected Areas** or **Infected Areas** were declared around Infected Premises and imposed specific disease control restrictions on that area. These area restrictions were often removed before the restrictions on individual premises were lifted. Thus restricted premises could have been located outside Infected Areas or Restricted Infected Areas;

(4) a **Controlled Area** extended beyond an Infected Area and was imposed when there was good reason to believe that there had been widespread dissemination of disease. Restrictions were put in place to prevent the spread of disease including the licensing of animal movements and the closure of markets;

(5) **Form B** - was served to withdraw **Form A** restrictions;

(6) **Form C** - when a veterinary inspector suspected that an animal or carcass was affected with FMD they would issue a **Form C Certificate**. The effect was to impose movement restrictions in an 8 km radius around the Form A premises. Restrictions were withdrawn if FMD was not confirmed, or when an Infected Area was declared;

(7) **Form C** was not issued when the suspect premises was inside the boundary of an existing Infected Area;

(8) **Form D** - where a veterinary inspector had reasonable grounds for suspecting that an animal had been exposed to infection, they would serve a **Form D Notice** on the occupier of the premises on which the animal was located or on the owner or person in charge of that animal;

(9) **Form D** restrictions were also placed on all holdings within a 3 km radius of the Infected place. Form D could be issued for an unlimited period or for 21/28 days in relation to a dangerous contact. In the latter case, the Form D would either lapse after this period, be extended or be lifted earlier with a **Form E**;

(10) **Form D** restrictions were applied to premises that were deemed to be 'dangerous contacts' to Infected Premises, ie subject to Form A;

(11) **Modified Form D** - served where animals were slaughtered as having been exposed to infection. They were not subject to a time limit and imposed similar restrictions to those of a Form A. Modified Form Ds were lifted by **Form E**;

(12) **Form E** - served to withdraw restrictions on **Form D** premises;

(13) **Article 38** - used to apply restrictions to specific areas on farm premises and to impose particular conditions upon that place.

N.B. Restrictions that apply during an FMD outbreak are set out in the Foot-and-mouth Disease Order 1983, as amended. Anyone failing to comply with requirements of these statutory provisions may be guilty of an offence punishable by fine or, in some cases, imprisonment.

APPENDIX 6
(para 7(1) and 12)

DISINFECTION EQUIPMENT AND PROCEDURES

1 Inspectors will be supplied on personal issue with the following:

- (1) approved disinfectant;
- (2) transportable, sealable water containers (10 Litre capacity);
- (3) leakproof plastic bucket or container in which to mix the solution;
- (4) handheld brush and synthetic sponge;
- (5) disposable gloves or rubber 'washing up' type gloves and eye protection to prevent eyes being splashed with disinfectant concentrate;
- (6) plastic bags to contain items;
- (7) a large container/box to carry items;
- (8) a labelled rigid, crush-proof container, eg 'Tupperware' style box for storing Virkon S sachets, if appropriate; and
- (9) liquid soap/detergent.

2 The disinfectants issued to inspectors will be approved both for use under Foot-and-mouth Disease (FMD) and General Orders. Further information on approved disinfectants can be found on the DEFRA website.

3 Inspectors should take with them approximately 20 litres of water, in two containers to avoid risk of injury when lifting. When going onto each farm, inspectors should seek to refill the water containers for use next time. Additional supplies of water should be carried if for any reason it is anticipated that this will not be possible.

4 Inspectors should comply with the following guidance. They should disinfect boots and waterproof clothing (if used) BEFORE and AFTER each farm visit. One mix of disinfectant solution can be used twice (ie before and after a visit) but will need to

be covered and labelled appropriately if left unattended. It should be left in a secure place so that it is not accessible to children or animals. Also:

- (1) disinfectants must be handled according to the manufacturer's instructions;
- (2) wash off all organic matter before applying disinfectant;
- (3) mix the disinfectant according to the manufacturer's instructions. Where there is more than one recommended concentration, eg General Orders or FMD Orders, the stronger concentration should be used;
- (4) a sponge can be effective for applying disinfectant to protective clothing. When using brushes, brush away from the face/eyes;
- (5) the used disinfectant solution should be disposed of according to manufacturer's instructions;
- (6) equipment should then be stored safely in suitable sealed storage boxes or plastic bags; and
- (7) wash hands with soap and water at the end of the disinfection procedure.

APPENDIX 7 (para 13)

HEALTH AND SAFETY

1 The Sector will keep the biosecurity arrangements under review and will keep bands 1/2 informed of any current DEFRA animal disease orders.

2 Risk assessments for the use of disinfectant and manual handling have been prepared and posted on the HSE intranet.

3 Line managers are responsible for ensuring that inspectors are familiar with the current health and safety risk assessments, COSHH assessments, FOD's Health and Safety Policy as it applies to working in agriculture and guidance on animal disease orders issued by DEFRA.

USE OF disinfectant

4 When using DEFRA approved disinfectants, inspectors should:

- (1) read the instructions on the packet and take note of safety information;
- (2) avoid contact with eyes and skin;
- (3) wear eye protection and gloves when handling concentrated disinfectant;
- (4) when using powder concentrate supplied in soluble sachets, immerse the sachet under water to avoid inhalation of the dust;
- (5) add the concentrated product to the water and mix thoroughly. Warm (not exceeding 40⁰C) but not hot, water can be used with most disinfectants but this should be checked before use;
- (6) do not mix with other chemicals; and
- (7) keep away from children.

FIRST-AID MEASURES

5 When using disinfectants always make sure you have a suitable supply of clean

water or eye wash fluid readily available:

(1) in the case of skin contact wash of immediately with copious quantities of water or eye wash. Seek medical advice if irritation persists; or

(2) in case of contact with eyes, including any splashes, rinse IMMEDIATELY with plenty of water and seek medical advice;

6 For further information refer to HSE intranet at Your Health and Safety - Incidents.

STORAGE/TRANSPORT OF DISINFECTANTS

7 Concentrated disinfectants should be stored in accordance with manufacturer's instruction. Generally this means in leakproof containers in a cool dry place away from direct sunlight and segregated from other substances.

8 Only sufficient disinfectant for the day's work should be carried.

9 If supplied, liquid concentrates should be transported in robust containers with tightly fitting leak proof lids, and be correctly labelled. The container should have its top securely screwed on and be placed in a plastic bucket or similar to safeguard against spillage whilst in the vehicle.

10 Disinfectant sachets should be carried in a rigid, correctly labelled, tightly closed crush-proof container.

11 Ensure that disinfectant is stored safely and NOT accessible to children, etc.

FURTHER ADVICE

12 Further advice on the safe use of disinfectants and general health and safety information can be obtained from FOD's Health and Safety Advisor or the Agriculture & Food Sector.