With everyone’s focus on the implications on HPAI in the dairy industry, let’s remember that good biosecurity and best management practices have been the mainstay of a healthy dairy herd since we learned that illness and disease are transmitted by bacteria and viruses.

Many hours of training and hard work are invested to prepare healthy, high-quality animals for competition. Exhibition of animals is a rewarding experience. Unfortunately, even healthy animals entered in fairs are at risk or exposure to disease.

Fair and exhibitions may pose a potential threat to individual animal health. The commingling of animals of different species, breeds, and ages, from multiple premises and herd management backgrounds, creates an environment for potential exposure and spread of animal diseases. The stresses of travel, close confinement, and a changing environment, may compromise an animal’s resistance to disease. People attending the fair also contribute to potential disease spread. At the end of the fair, animals that return to their home premises may also pose a risk of disease spread to their home herd.

Biosecurity refers to measures taken to prevent the introduction of new disease agents into a herd. Commingling of animals, multiple human contacts, and contaminated equipment represent the greatest threats for disease exposure and spread at a fair. To minimize risks, fair exhibitors can implement a fair biosecurity plan. The objective of a fair exhibitor’s biosecurity plan is to minimize potential exposure to disease and to prevent or limit disease spread from the fair to the home premises. Even the best biosecurity plan may not eliminate all risk of disease exposure; each step taken will reduce the potential. Successful biosecurity plans include the following practices:

- To restrict animal contact with other animals, people, and livestock equipment,
- To clean and disinfect equipment, and
- To isolate and remove sick animals.

**Biosecurity Before the Fair**

Disease prevention and fair biosecurity start before exhibitors leave home. Only healthy animals should be entered in the fair. Before animals leave the home premises, the herd veterinarian should examine each animal to ensure healthy animals enter the fairgrounds.

Tools and equipment may harbor disease agents. To minimize potential disease spread from the home premises to the fair, before packing for transport, clean and disinfect:

- Feed equipment: buckets, feeders, and hay racks.
- Cleaning utensils: shovels, pitch forks, grooming equipment: clippers and brushers and wheelbarrows.
- Vehicle and trailer (inside and outside).
- Use approved disinfectants that are safe for human and animal contact: https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-m-registered-antimicrobial-products-label-claims-avian-influenza
- Avoid transporting animals from different premises in the same trailer.

**Biosecurity at the Fair**

- Limit animal-animal contact,
- Limit animal-human-animal contact,
- Avoid sharing equipment with other exhibitors unless you thoroughly clean and disinfect between use, cover feed and equipment to reduce risk of contamination.
- Use your own milking equipment and never share milkers between exhibitors. If the show requires you to use their equipment, disassemble, wash and sanitize the milker before using.
- Change clothing, hats, and shoes used at the fair before doing chores at home.
• At the end of the fair, clean all animals returning home and disinfect all equipment before loading the trailer.
• Unused feed, hay, and bedding should be discarded at the fairgrounds, not taken home.

Biosecurity After the Fair
The possibility of animal exposure to disease agents can occur with even the best biosecurity practices at the fair. Since they may be harboring disease agents without clinical signs, your protocols should include:
• Consult your veterinarian to develop an isolation plan suitable for your premises and herd.
• Animals returning from the fair should be isolated from other animals, wildlife and pets.
• Monitor animals in isolation daily for signs of illness and contact the herd veterinarian if any unusual symptoms are observed.
• To minimize the possible chance of disease spread to the main herd, modify your chore routine to care for isolated fair animals last.
• Change your clothes after completing chores for isolated animals.
• Consult a health care provider and your state or local public health department if exhibitors or family members develop influenza-like illness (e.g., fever or chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, tiredness, and/or vomiting and diarrhea).

Use of fair biosecurity is a good management practice. These practices contribute to keeping your animals healthy and help to protect all Iowa livestock. As conditions change, IDALS and the state veterinarian will ultimately decide what changes will be required for county and regional dairy shows.

The most current (May 22, 2024) recommendations for Dairy Cattle livestock exhibitions from USDA APHIS can be found here: