

Biosecurity in Light of COVID-19

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SPEAKERS

Speaker 3, Christa Hartsook, Dr. Dannelle Bickett-Weddle

C Christa Hartsook 00:15
Hello, and welcome to the Small Farms Podcast, a production of the Small Farms program at Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Our podcast covers the opportunities and challenges associated with rural life. In this episode I interview Dr. Dannelle Bickett-Weddle, Associate Director of the Center for Food Security and Public Health at Iowa State University. And we're talking about biosecurity. I'm Krista Hartsook, Small Farms Program Coordinator, and we hope you enjoy the show. Dannelle, welcome back thanks for being on.

D Dr. Dannelle Bickett-Weddle 00:47
Thanks for the opportunity.

C Christa Hartsook 00:49
So we're talking today about biosecurity in general and biosecurity in light of what we are going through right now with COVID-19. Why is this so important?

D Dr. Dannelle Bickett-Weddle 01:00
Our security means protection, right. So whether we're trying to protect our families from

disease exposure, or animals from diseases they normally get, biosecurity is so important these days to take those extra precautions to make sure that we're not exposing ourselves unnecessarily.

C Christa Hartsook 01:18
When we are evaluating our own operation, what are some of those first steps that we really need to take a look at in terms of our own biosecurity measures?

D Dr. Dannelle Bickett-Weddle 01:28
Well if we're thinking about the people that are there to take care of the animals and trusted to our care, we really want to make sure that the people coming are healthy. So if people are showing any of the signs of COVID-19, we want to make sure that they stay home and protect themselves. And we have to do things a little bit differently to care for our animals that day.

C Christa Hartsook 01:48
And Dannelle, we might have you know, outside visitors to our farm, we might still need a nutritionist, we might still need a veterinarian to come out to the farm. Obviously, we know things look a little differently today. How should we be handling that?

D Dr. Dannelle Bickett-Weddle 02:01
Excellent question. So people to people is our big concern with COVID-19. It's not an animal disease. It's not in our cows. It's not in our sheep. It's not in our goats. So when we think about people that need to still come and service our farm, we want to make sure that we're practicing social distancing. We can also ask those questions just like we would with any of our employees. So have they been to areas known to have heavy concentrations of COVID-19 patients in people? Have they experienced a fever, any shortness of breath, or any of the other clinical signs that COVID-19 would pose? If they are, we ask them to stay home? So start by having those conversations over the phone before someone comes onto your operation.

C Christa Hartsook 02:44
Great advice. Let's talk in terms of you know, general biosecurity and things we might want to reflect on now knowing that we are going through this outbreak. And are there types of signage or things like that we should be considering for our farm?

D Dr. Dannelle Bickett-Weddle 02:59

I think it would be great if more of our farms would put up signs, especially now, again, not an animal disease that we're talking about, but the people side of things. And so if there's a sign at your front gate that just says please call this number, if you want to visit. That's a great first step. Another sign might just be you know, we aren't accepting tours or visitors at this time to protect the health of our people. So not animal-specific but people-specific in this case.

C Christa Hartsook 03:31

Dannelle, I know I think it lends itself during this time to also think of our animals and just good biosecurity measures in general knowing we could potentially have foreign animal disease outbreaks and things like that. What other types of biosecurity measures should we be thinking about in terms of the health of our animals?

D Dr. Dannelle Bickett-Weddle 03:48

Great question. So with any animal disease, the biggest way we can introduce a disease is by bringing in animals of the same species. So it's important that if we are going to purchase any animals that we want to make sure we understand the health history of that farm. So know what their vaccination protocol has been, know if there are any diseases that that farm has been tested for, having that conversation with the producer selling them, or maybe the veterinarian that services that operation is a great first place to start to know the health of those animals brought in.

C Christa Hartsook 04:22

Anything else we need to think of in terms of the way we handle and move our livestock in general?

D Dr. Dannelle Bickett-Weddle 04:30

So if you're practicing a closed herd on the people side, so that there's not new people that you're being exposed to, and it's the people in your family, right, the social distancing isn't as vital because they're people you live in a household with. So being close to each other is okay when you're moving livestock. But if you do have a farmhand come or a neighbor, and that's not somebody that is in your circle of daily exposure, you'll want to practice that social distancing. So making sure that you can hear each other, talking through hand signals, making sure you've got good line of sight because you know, some

people might have a harder time when you're unloading a group of heifers or pigs to hear you. So making sure that you can see each other or hear each other well, so that you can practice that six foot of social distancing away from each other. Safety, always important, whether we're in a COVID-19 outbreak or not, we want to make sure that we've got good sturdy fences, gates, that things can get latched. So when we are moving things that we're practicing that in a safe manner as well. So good line of sight, being able to hear each other and making sure that things are safe applies today, just like it would any other time. But again, important that those people that aren't normally in each other's exposure circles, are practicing that six foot of distance between each other.



Christa Hartsook 05:54

Absolutely. Dannelle, we both have kids that are in the 4-H program. And I know we talked a little bit before we started recording this podcast about experiences and education opportunities in terms of biosecurity for our youth exhibitors, and you mentioned you have something new from the center.



Dr. Dannelle Bickett-Weddle 06:12

Yes, we do. So our team of veterinarians here at the Center for Food Security and Public Health at Iowa State developed two free web-based courses. And anywhere from ages 7 to 18, they can pick what their age group is and they can learn about how do we make sure that our animals are healthy, and practice good biosecurity. And the website is www.bluenotflu.org. We want people to bring home a blue ribbon from the fair not necessarily flu, as we experience sometimes with our swine species. So we want to make sure kids are learning in a fun, interactive online manner, about how they can protect themselves and protect their animals. And with all of our kids at home doing online learning, right, we want to make sure that this is an opportunity they have access to. So again, free online 'bluenotflu.org' will be available for the kids or youth leaders, 4-H group leaders, to make sure that they've got good educational materials that are fun and interactive for the kids to learn from.



Christa Hartsook 07:19

That's a great, great topic and a great resource for kids that are at home right now. Dannelle, talk to me a little bit about the Center itself, the Center for Food Security and Public Health does more than just biosecurity, pandemic outbreak information, things like that. What else do you guys cover and really deal with that?



Dr. Dannelle Bickett-Weddle 07:38

So our team of veterinarians, and our IT staff, our graphic designers are really kind of a place where you can go to get information about hundreds of animal diseases, a lot of times we focus on the diseases that are a little unusual. So things we call foreign animal or trans-boundary, things you might not see. But we do have a handful of common diseases, things that are also zoonotic, which is diseases spread between humans and animals. So we've got resources there, we've got PowerPoint presentations, pictures, if you really like to see what some of these diseases do in animals. We do a lot on emergency preparedness for animal diseases, which we're learning right a lot of the preparedness, things that we've talked about for our livestock producers, people are experiencing today. So you can go to our website at www.cfsph.iastate.edu and you'll find all kinds of resources. We even have online courses. If people want to learn more about animal disease emergencies, you can learn, you know, in your own pace on how to do that. So lots of great resources for a lot of different audiences found on that website.



Christa Hartsook 08:51

Dannelle, you know thanks so much for all of that information. Is there anything else we really need to highlight for our listeners today?



Dr. Dannelle Bickett-Weddle 08:57

You know, I think the thing that we keep hearing is, we're going to get through this right, we're tough. We're lowans, we experience challenges. Take care of yourself and take care of your families. If you're experiencing any of the stressors that this pandemic has created, lean on each other. The Iowa Care Hotline is there. There's a lot of mental health support for folks. So we really want to make sure that we're putting people first taking care of our animals, doing so in a healthy manner and making sure that we've got that safe food supply for our entire world.



Christa Hartsook 09:32

Great information and great resources. As always, thanks so much for being on tonight. I really appreciate it.



Dr. Dannelle Bickett-Weddle 09:38

Thanks for the opportunity. Have a great day.



Christa Hartsook 09:40

You too.



Speaker 3 09:41

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