



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 1, 2020

View Online

Agriculture Secretary: Food Security Begins on the Farm, Farmers Urged to Maintain Stringent Biosecurity Practices

Manheim, PA – Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding and State Veterinarian Dr. Kevin Brightbill were joined today by industry experts at Country View Family Farms of Hatfield Quality Meats to remind farmers the importance of written biosecurity and continuity of operations plans, and following them strictly, to the overall health and wellbeing of both their business operations and food security of the nation.

"If we've learned anything over the past seven months, it's that disease travels quickly, its effects are widespread, and minimizing risk is paramount," said Redding. "We've also learned that the food supply chain has many points of susceptibility.

"Farmers: your biosecurity and continuity of operations plans are the first line of defense," added Redding. "Providing a sustainable, safe, and secure food supply for our commonwealth and beyond starts with you."

From the beginning of the pandemic in Pennsylvania, the agriculture industry was deemed essential for a secure food supply. While the department issued guidance for the industry to safely continue operations as COVID-19 washed across Pennsylvania – including guidance for [Farms and On-Farm Deliveries](#) and [Farmers Markets and On-Farm Markets](#) – the industry was no stranger to managing operations in a manner that presented with the least risk possible.

In agriculture, biosecurity means doing everything you can to reduce the chances of an infectious disease being carried onto your farm by people, animals, products, equipment, or vehicles. It also means doing everything you can to reduce the chance a disease leaving your farm. The health of local herds and flocks contributes to the health of our nation's animal agriculture industry, and the health of the agriculture industry determines the safety, availability, and affordability for food.

Agricultural biosecurity plans include the following commonsense measures:

- Keep distance – restrict access to property and livestock or poultry and do not allow visitors near animals unless absolutely necessary;
- Keep it clean – farm manager, staff, and family should follow biosecurity procedures for cleanliness including wearing clean clothes, scrubbing shoes with disinfectant, thoroughly washing hands, and keeping equipment clean;
- Don't borrow disease from your neighbor – avoid sharing equipment, tools, or other supplies with neighbors; if you do borrow, clean and disinfect before they reach your property;
- Always be on the lookout for infectious diseases – know what diseases are of concern and monitor animals for signs or behavior consistent with disease; early detection is critical;

- Report sick animals – always report serious or unusual animal health problems to your veterinarian, local extension office, and Department of Agriculture. The Department of Agriculture State Animal Health Official can be reached 24/7 by calling (717) 772 -2852 and pressing option 1 to report an increased morbidity or mortality in your herd or flock that is unusual and could be associated with a potential foreign animal or high consequence disease.

“Don’t wait for tomorrow – take steps today to prevent catastrophic loss of your herd, your flock, and your livelihood,” said Brightbill. “Review your biosecurity plans, strengthen them, and retrain your farm hands by working with your herd or flock veterinarian. It’s game day and all 12 million Pennsylvanians are counting on you. With less than 2 percent of America feeding the world, we cannot afford to lose even one of you.”

In addition to biosecurity plans, all farms are encouraged to have Continuity of Business plans to keep operations running smoothly in case of disruption, such as illness or incapacitation of farm owner or team member, natural disaster, disease outbreaks or supply chain disruptions. While such plans are critical for all operations, small farms are at greater risk of catastrophic failure because the owner may be the sole caretaker.

Continuity of Business plans should include:

- General farm ID including fields and acres, key suppliers, key markets for product, and next of kin;
- Crop-based specifics, including crop rotation schedule, soil tests/records, pest management programs, key workers, and equipment; and
- Animal-based specifics including state and federal premise ID number, barn layouts, field grazing capacity, animal inventory, breeding records, feeding and nutrition records, standard operating procedures for animal care, veterinary treatment records and a biosecurity plan that is reviewed and updated at least once annually.

Producers with questions about biosecurity planning are encouraged to contact Pennsylvania’s [Center for Poultry and Livestock Excellence](#), a result of Governor Tom Wolf’s 2019 Pennsylvania Farm Bill, for resources.

For more information about the [PA Farm Bill](#) and investments to support Pennsylvania’s leading industry, visit agriculture.pa.gov or follow the department on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#). For information as it relates to agriculture during COVID-19 mitigation in Pennsylvania visit agriculture.pa.gov/COVID.

Note: Photos and video from the event available at PACast.com.

MEDIA CONTACT: Shannon Powers – shpowers@pa.gov

###