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People risks

People can move from one farm to another and they therefore represent a significant means of transferring disease causing organisms.

The closer people get to birds, the longer their contact time with birds and the shorter the time interval between flocks, the greater the likelihood of disease transfer. This information highlights two things we can do to improve biosecurity. We can prevent or minimise close contact with our birds and we can increase the time between seeing other poultry and visiting our birds. This second point we often refer to as 'days of poultry freedom'. This is the number of days that somebody has to keep away from all types of poultry before they can visit the farm. This can be as high as five days when visiting valuable breeders.

Then we can 'clean' people before letting them on to the farm and this can range from a change of footwear right up to five days of poultry freedom coupled to an intensive showering regimen.

The procedure for entering a farm with maximum biosecurity has various stages:

- Comply with 'days of poultry freedom' and stool testing requirements.
- Leave personal effects, including mobile phone. in a secure area or your car.
- Walk through disinfectant sprays.
- Remove footwear and all clothing in an outer changing room and leave there.
- Thoroughly shower and wash hair using antimicrobial soap/shampoo.
- Dry yourself and dress in farm provided clothing and footwear.
- Sanitise hands with alcohol or disinfectant gel.

To ensure your staff shower thoroughly, the facilities must provide:

- A shower that is kept clean and mould free.
- A good ambient air temperature.
- Plenty of hot water and a shower head with a generous spray.
- People friendly soaps and shampoos.
- Large clean towels.

On farms with staff of various nationalities, a sequence of illustrations can be used to explain the procedure.

Where salmonella freedom is an issue there may well be a requirement for stool testing (faecal screening for salmonella). In addition, staff should always wash and sanitise their hands thoroughly after going to the toilet. The practice of having the latrine as a hole in the litter in one corner of the shed must be a complete non-starter.

Remember, man has two attributes that differentiate him from other animals – he likes to find shortcuts or even bypass activities which he can not understand and he likes to do his own thing rather than be told how to do something. Both of these can undermine a biosecurity programme. Therefore, it is always best to explain to staff the reasons behind why they have to do something.

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