



What is risk?

Risk is the possibility of losing something of value. Values, such as physical health, social status, emotional well-being or financial wealth, can be gained or lost when taking a risk resulting from a given action or inaction that can be either planned or unplanned. If we look at risk with regard to health there are numerous related factors, such as changing feeds, increasing or decreasing feed intake, high house temperature, power failure, etc, etc.

People coming on to the farm

If we concentrate on the risk of people coming on to the farm, how we can quantify it? This risk has several components. Has the person had contact with diseased poultry or anything else that carries a disease-causing micro-organism? We can divide these into diseases that come from poultry, for example their meat, eggs, blood and faeces, and those which come from poultry products and other sources. A good example is Salmonella typhimurium.

If our person has had no contact with poultry, or products derived from them, then they will present no risk to our flock.

Risk determining factors

Next, you can consider the risk a person who has had contact with poultry places on your flock and try to quantify it. Several factors come into play here:

- How many disease causing micro-organisms did they come into contact with? This can be high for a broiler house which is under ventilated and is full of snicking birds.
- Contact with poultry. The closer they get to the birds and the longer they are in that position, the greater the number of micro-organism transfer. Likewise, when they get to your farm keep them away from your poultry or minimise the time they are physically close to them.
- What is the time between leaving a sick flock and visiting your birds? Micro-organisms die off with time – so the longer the time gap before a person comes to you the better.
- What is the distance between leaving sick poultry and visiting your farm? The greater the distance, the better it is for your flock. This links into time (see above).
- What are the conditions whilst moving between flocks? Think of a sales rep travelling in a car with the roof down during the summer and one driving in winter. The former will have the wind blowing through the car exposing them to a variety of different micro-organisms.

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