



Disease Prevention

Preventing the occurrence and spread of disease on farms reduces the need for antibiotic treatments. In this section you can find guidance that will help to keep your animals healthy.

Better disease control = less disease = lower costs and fewer antibiotic treatments = a more sustainable business.

Biosecurity

Biosecurity measures help to prevent the entry and spread of infectious diseases on farms. Good biosecurity can help improve animal health and productivity and prevent costly disease outbreaks on farms.

Diseases are caused by pathogens (e.g. bacteria, viruses) which spread by direct or indirect contact or transmission. Direct transmission occurs through contact between animals, between animals and people, droplets from sneezing or coughing, and bodily fluids. Indirect transmission can occur from contaminated machinery, equipment and tools, feed and water, and pest or insect vectors. These mechanisms for disease spread can be interrupted by using appropriate biosecurity measures to protect the health and wellbeing of the animals on your farm. Good biosecurity measures and protocols form a solid foundation for a high health system and a productive farm.

Vaccination

Vaccines have made a huge contribution to improving the health, welfare and productivity of cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry. They are a vital component in preventing a range of diseases and are complementary to good hygiene and animal nutrition.

When animals are exposed to infections and recover, they develop immunity to further attacks by the same infectious pathogen. Their immune system, in effect, remembers the bacteria or virus and launches a quicker, more effective response to remove it if they are exposed again. Vaccination mimics infection but allows the animal to develop immunity without succumbing to the disease. This means the animals are more resilient to future infections, showing minor or no symptoms of illness, thus requiring fewer treatments. Vaccinations are another tool for keeping animals healthy, for the benefit of the animals, the farmer and consumers.

Breeding for Resilience

Genetics can play an important role in determining animals' susceptibility to disease and their responses to other physical, environmental and social stressors. Breeding for improved resilience fosters good health and wellbeing for animals in future generations, benefiting overall farm performance.

Resilience is an animal's capacity to be minimally affected by, or to quickly recover from, challenges to their physical and mental states. Challenges may include disease, temperature stress, novel environments, human interactions and changes to social groups. Animals' ability to cope under different conditions is in part determined by genetics. Selective breeding for favourable traits can make them more common in future generations. Indicators for general resilience are being researched, but health-related traits like longevity and growth can act as indicators for disease resilience to help protect the health status of your animals.

