

# The biosecurity option

by Les Vermeulen

**As herds and farms grow larger, the threat of disease increases. Germs know no boundaries! They lurk in housing facilities and get into pens on the boots of workers and visitors. Once they spread, these germs can lead to very serious illnesses. But there is a solution. It is called biosecurity and is also known as livestock disease intervention.**

Successful biosecurity has three elements namely: vaccination and nutrition; cleaning and sanitation; diagnostics and quarantine.

Cleaning and sanitation is probably the most effective approach for disease prevention. A proper assessment must be made of the facilities. Identify the critical areas where pathogens can enter the farm. There should only be one combined entrance and exit to the farm. In this way there will be full control of who enters and who leaves the farm.

## General farm hygiene

This is the responsibility of all the staff on the farm. All employees should know the farm's biosecurity policy and must be able to explain it to visitors. The farmer must draw up a written biosecurity plan that can include a foot dip policy between farms and buildings. It can also include disinfecting facilities for consultants, veterinary surgeons and other visitors. Such a plan should:

- Insist that all staff and visitors use the foot dip
- State that the milking parlour and other facilities should be clean and hygienic at all times
- Insist on clean and disinfected vehicles after transporting stock
- Indicate that visitors' vehicles should park outside the premises, or in a disinfecting bay.

## Feed storage facilities

- Poor feed facilities encourage birds and vermin such as rats, which spread disease
- Clean out and disinfect feed troughs and feeding stances regularly
- Remove feed that is not eaten and dispose of it responsibly.

## Keep stock separate

- Eliminate contact with neighbouring farms through good fences and secure gates
- Milk mastitis cows last and disinfect the parlour after use.

## Quarantine

New animals should be isolated and checked for visible signs of illness. If they are ill, they must be treated immediately. If cows are in milk, the milk must first be tested to make sure that no contagious bacteria are present. It could be very costly if other cows in the herd are infected by these cows.

## Vaccination programme

The local veterinarian can provide a yearly vaccination programme.

## Vermin and rodent control

- An adequate rodent and fly control programme must be in place
- Animals and birds should be kept away from feed stores.

Biosecurity is the first step to a solid prevention programme. If you have a clean environment, you will have healthier animals. **UM**