

Maintaining hygiene on your farm

Plant pests, diseases and weed seeds can easily spread from one property to another on clothing, shoes, equipment and vehicles.

Always check your shoes, clothing, hair and hats for any seeds or plant material, paying special attention to your shoes as they can easily carry contaminated soil and weed seeds.

There are also a range of other hygiene and biosecurity practices you can implement to reduce the risk of pests or disease impacting your farm.

Equipment and people spread disease – how can you reduce the risks?

Maintaining good on-farm biosecurity practices will help protect crops and reduces the risk of spread.

Decontamination of vehicles, clothing, equipment, and machinery as well as restricting movement of people and equipment/machinery are important biosecurity measures to have in place. Other biosecurity measures include:

- **display signage** on your farm to alert people to the potential impact they could have entering your farm
- **have a visitor register** on your farm to track movements
- **brief all workers** on your biosecurity procedures
- **provide cleaning materials** such as scrubbing brushes, disinfection footbaths, boot covers, rubber boots and protective clothing such as disposable overalls to people entering your farm
- **check visitor and employee footwear, clothing and equipment** is free of soil and plant material before entering or leaving your property.

On-farm signage

Use farm biosecurity signs to inform visitors of your biosecurity status and what you require from them.

Effective signs:

- are clear, visible and well maintained
- contain simple messages (e.g. 'Do not enter the farm without prior approval' or 'Use wash down facilities for cleaning vehicles and machinery')

South Australian producers can collect farm biosecurity gate signs from PIRSA Plant Health at 33 Flemington St, Glenside (phone: 8207 7900) or PIRSA Murray Bridge Office at Bremer Road, Murray Bridge (phone: 8539 2112).

You can also support your signage with other biosecurity measures such as restricted access points.

People

Visitors and workers

People can unintentionally carry new pests, diseases or weeds onto your property diseases without even realising.

This means anyone visiting your property including suppliers, vets, transporters, stock agents, consultants, short-term workers, researchers and contractors, is a potential biosecurity risk.

There are a number of biosecurity practices you can put in place to reduce this risk:

- **limit entry points** to access the property – ideally there should only be one access point so that all movements can be recorded
- **direct all visitors** to a designated parking area by using clear signage, and ask them to report to management and sign a visitor register
- **check visitors vehicles, equipment, boots and clothing** to ensure they are clean and free from pests, weed seeds and plant materials
- **refuse entry for any visitor** who declines to clean vehicles, equipment and boots, or cannot demonstrate that their clothing is clean
- **limit visitor contact** with livestock, crops or plant materials and eliminate any unnecessary contact altogether
- **ensure visitors disinfect hands** before and after coming into contact with livestock, plant material or soil
- **ensure visitors clean and disinfect equipment** in-between uses on different properties

- **educate your staff** so they are familiar with the basic symptoms associated with a pest or disease outbreak and know how to report them.

Vehicles

It is important to maintain equipment hygiene and ensure all vehicles that visit your property are clean and well maintained. This also includes movement of your own vehicles between properties.

Vehicle access

Knowing who has entered your property allows possible sources of diseases, pests or weeds to be tracked. Limiting the number of vehicle access points to your property will also limit the potential entry sites and allow you to monitor these areas closely.

Make sure you:

- limit the number of entry and exit points (one is preferable)
- examine each vehicle entry and exit point for the risk they pose, particularly in relation to the distance from livestock and crops
- display biosecurity signs, with clear instructions and contact details at all vehicle access points
- clearly sign and lock restricted access areas
- keep a visitor register.

Vehicle hygiene

Vehicle tyres, undercarriages, grills, floors and trays can carry diseases, pests or weeds in soil, plant material and manure.

Make sure you:

- ensure visitor vehicles are clean and are parked in a designated area away from livestock or crops
- establish a vehicle high pressure wash down facility well away from livestock and crops to clean your vehicles and equipment as well as others that need to enter the property
- have a sump in the wash down area to collect any waste water
- direct any run off away from livestock pens, paddocks, crops and waterways
- regularly check areas around the wash down facility for new pests or weeds
- keep an up-to-date equipment and vehicle cleaning record
- clean machinery from the top down and dismantle it as far as possible to gain access to internal spaces
- clean and disinfect all borrowed or second hand machinery before using it on your property
- follow any wash down with a broad spectrum disinfectant. This will further reduce the risk of introducing less visible threats like bacteria, viruses, and spores onto your property.

Equipment

Equipment hygiene and storage

Regularly clean and disinfect all storage containers, tools and equipment, and store away from potential contaminants.

The regular use of a suitable disinfectant is important and most effective when applied to a visually clean surface.

Make sure surfaces to be disinfected are free from soil, manure, plant and animal residues.

Dedicated equipment for high risk areas

You can assign equipment (including tools, clothing, and footwear) for use in disease, pest and weed affected areas. The equipment used in infected or infested areas should not be reused in clean areas, and vice versa.

Potting and propagating facilities

Using good hygiene practices undertaken during potting and propagation will minimise the chance of pests spreading.

The facilities and areas designated for propagation activities should be separated from production areas.

Make sure you:

- regularly wash and disinfect benches and tools used for propagation, preferably between each batch of soil media or plant material
- clean and disinfect potting containers before use
- collect and dispose of all spilt material and plant waste.

Note. Material in this publication has been adapted from farmbiosecurity.com.au and from the AUSVEG SA/Primary Industries and Regions SA Clean Your Farm program.