

WHITE PAPER | Poultry

Volume 1 | Issue 1 | July 21, 2020



Biosecurity: Going to the Birds?

Basic Poultry Biosecurity Measures during Covid-19

Recent events around the world have caused us all to be more aware of the risks associated with shortfalls in biosecurity. COVID-19 has caused us all to do what we can to limit exposure to this coronavirus for ourselves and others. Just a few short months ago, who would have thought people in the United States would be wearing masks to the local supermarket, using hand sanitizer multiple times each day and gaining our first exposure to something called “social distancing”? Those are just naming a few of the directives from the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

Biosecurity no longer just refers to the practices and procedures utilized to limit the spread of disease-causing organisms in poultry flocks. As it turns out, we are all more vividly aware of and practicing preventative methods in a collaborative effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19, wherever we live.

At QTI, we are totally committed to following the biosecurity requirements, practices and guidelines of our customers and prospects. When it comes to COVID-19, we have the utmost respect for what our national and local governments determine are “hot spots” and we stay clear. We monitor ourselves and if we don’t feel well or have a temperature we stay home. We can always reschedule our plans.

Most of us know the primary method of spreading disease causing microbes in poultry flocks is via contaminated equipment or from exposure to contaminated clothing and footwear of humans. Wild birds and rodents can also be sources of pathogenic organisms.

With these thoughts in mind, it could be worthwhile to review the basics of Biosecurity – especially in poultry flocks. We all

can understand how disease microbes can be and have been found on people’s clothes, shoes, skin and hair. As a result, it’s common for integrator employees to wear disposable coveralls, hair nets, plastic boots and masks (sometimes) into poultry houses.



Below, is a summary of the standard measures we practice and need to pay close attention to on farm to increase the biosecurity of the flocks we visit and work with. Those basic procedures are;

Keep Visitors to a Minimum: Remember, human transport of disease-causing microbes is the #1 cause.

Limit Visitations to Other Poultry Farms: Growers should avoid visiting other farms unless absolutely necessary.

Keep ALL Animals Out of Poultry Houses: Keep poultry houses as “closed” as possible. Wild birds, farm dogs shouldn’t be in the houses.

Rodent and Pest Control Critical: Rats and mice; flies and darkling beetles can carry and spread microbes. Eliminating these pests with an adequate control program is paramount.

Avoid Contact with Non-commercial Poultry & Wild Birds: Avoid all contact with non-commercial sources of poultry. The list to avoid should contain; backyard flocks, county and state fairs plus, local, regional and national shows. Wild ducks, geese and turkeys should be avoided, too. If a grower is a hunter, the same biosecurity practices should be followed (shower, change clothes, sanitize vehicles, etc.).

Walk (inspect) the Flocks – Daily: A contractual requirement with the integrator for the grower to walk their birds daily is an industry standard. Look for signs of acute and potentially chronic morbidity and report any issues to your Service Tech. Special emphasis needs to be given to mortality. Picking up dead birds and properly disposing of them in a timely manner and allowing carcasses to decompose in a structured system helps control the spread of diseases.

Keep Good Husbandry Practices: This means maintaining dry litter (20:30% moisture is a good rule of thumb) and providing good ventilation to control ammonia and keep the birds seasonally comfortable. This helps lessen the presence and spread of disease microbes.

Control Grasses and Weeds around Barns and Feed Bins: Using good grass and weed management helps keep rat, mice and insect populations under control. Keep spilled feed cleaned up so birds, rats, mice and insects stay clear.

Look for Disease Symptoms: Early detection of contagious diseases will greatly reduce the impact and spread of identified diseases to other flocks. Some really important clinical signs can be: Lethargic birds, Lower egg production, Swelling in the head, comb, eyes, wattles and hocks, Nasal discharge, Coughing and/or sneezing, Diarrhea and Sudden or excessive mortality are a few of the clinical signs of disease.

Biosecurity is such an important tool to utilize in protecting flocks from potentially pathogenic microbial contamination. The critical steps aren't hard to remember or implement. It's a good practice of quality control and compassionate animal care that can result in a positive economic impact for poultry growers. Practicing a sound biosecurity program helps reduce the threat of contracting a costly disease and will reduce the impact of the disease spreading if an outbreak occurs. Biosecurity is **Going to the Birds – it should!**

