403.80 Purpose

To provide policy for all NRCS employees on implementing proper biosecurity measures.

403.81 General

The transmission of infectious animal diseases, such as foot and mouth, avian influenza, porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDv), Johne’s disease, and others, threaten the food supply. The spread of plant pests, plant diseases and noxious weeds can destabilize an abundant, high-quality, and varied food supply. These threats are a national concern requiring the cooperative participation of NRCS and USDA agencies and partners.

403.82 Background

NRCS is a member of the USDA interagency forum of the National Food and Agriculture Council (NFAC) along with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and other agencies. APHIS is the lead agency for providing technical guidance for plant and animal concerns. This information is maintained through the APHIS Web site http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wps/portal/aphis/home/.

NFAC issued guidelines for all USDA employees to follow to minimize risk of the spread of diseases affecting animal health and welfare, plants health, and the spread of invasive species. The NRCS Associate Chief of Conservation has responsibility for NRCS conservation activities and programs which includes participation on the NFAC.

403.83 Authorities

This policy is based on and addresses the following authorities in partnership with APHIS under the Plant Protection Act, as amended (7 U.S.C. 7701-7786), and the Animal Health Protection Act (7 U.S.C. 8301 et seq.).

403.84 Policy

A. Animal production protection

(1) At all times, the NRCS employee will adhere to the level of biosecurity applicable to the planned activity, or to more stringent measures that the farmer/rancher or owner/producer has in place. The selection of level 1, 2, or 3 biosecurity measures will depend on the degree of interaction of NRCS staff with the producer’s office, facilities, or livestock. To the extent possible, avoid situations that require level 3 biosecurity by conducting visits when livestock are not present.

(2) During periods of heightened concern, before an identified outbreak, and for the prevention of the spread of infectious animal disease, additional procedures beyond those outlined in levels 2 and 3 below may be implemented if specified by APHIS or the State veterinarian.

(3) Biosecurity levels

(i) Level 1.—Visits to farms/ranches that entail office or home visits only, the NRCS employee will:
   · Park the vehicle on hardened area designated for parking, if available. Park the vehicle away from animal areas and out of any runoff coming from animal areas. Avoid driving in manure or wastewater runoff.
   · Wash hands with soap and water or an antibacterial gel that is at least 60 percent alcohol before entering and after leaving the premises to avoid transmitting disease agents from person to person.

(ii) Level 2.—Visits to farms / ranches where minimal contact with animal manure, livestock/poultry, or their housing (barns, pens, hutch, etc.) is unavoidable to attain the goal of the visit, the NRCS employee will:
   · Preplan the needed supplies for daily visits including, but not limited to, boots (rubber or disposable plastic), a large water container/sprayer, a spray bottle for application of a bleach/water mixture or an Environmental Protection Agency- (EPA) approved disinfectant, bleach or disinfectant, a long-handled brush, trash bags, paper towels, liquid antibacterial soap or an antibacterial gel that is at least 60-percent alcohol, and a bucket/pail as needed.
   · Designate a “clean” area in your vehicle to place clean equipment and boots.
   · Designate a “dirty” area in your vehicle for clothing and equipment that has been
used on the farm.

- Wash hands with soap and water or an antibacterial gel after entering and before leaving the premises to avoid transmitting disease agents from person to person.
- Put on clean rubber or new plastic boots prior to exiting the vehicle.

- Clean dirt and manure from equipment and rubber boots with a brush and water. Disinfect the equipment and boots with bleach (1/2 cup bleach to 1 gallon water) or an EPA-approved disinfestant solution. The EPA listing of potential pesticides for use against the causative agents of animal diseases in farm settings can be found at: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/emerge/downloads/fad_epa_disinfestants.pdf. Mix and apply the disinfestant according to label directions to ensure the proper contact time of the disinfestant with the surface being disinfected. Dispose of disinfestant solution according to the label. Do not discard unused disinfestant on the ground.
- If the vehicle comes into contact with dirt or manure during the farm visit, clean dirt and manure from tires and wheel wells with water and a brush. If possible, also remove dirt and manure from other parts of the vehicle. Disinfect the tires and wheel wells with a bleach/water mixture or with an EPA-approved disinfestant solution. If the vehicle cannot be cleaned in the field, take it to a car wash before visiting another farm/ranch. Give extra attention to cleaning the undercarriage.
- Place plastic boots in a plastic bag and leave the bag on the premises for disposal by the owner/producer or place the bag in a designated dirty area of your vehicle.

(iii) Level 3.—Visits to farms/ranches where there will be close contact with livestock/poultry (walking through narrowly confined pens/lots where animals are within reach or handled in the process of working), the NRCS employee will use level 2 biosecurity plus the following procedures:

- Preplan the needed supplies and clothing for daily visits including, but not limited to, coveralls (cloth or disposable) and nitrile gloves;
- Put on a pair of clean coveralls for each visit.
- Remove coveralls in a manner that they are inside out and place them in a trash bag.
- Place the clean equipment and boots in the designated clean area of the vehicle.
- Dispose of all plastic bags that contain dirty supplies in a manner that prevents exposure to other livestock.
- Launder all cloth coveralls.
- Shampoo hair and clean under fingernails.

(4) During an outbreak of an infectious animal disease NRCS employees will not enter affected areas except in response to a request from the State veterinarian or other responsible official. In those situations, the employee will follow the biosecurity measures as required by APHIS, the State veterinarian, and other responsible official.

B. Crop production protection

NRCS employees will be responsible for actions in visiting fields. Assume that every farm is a potential risk to carry disease organisms, and act accordingly. Plan to schedule work in fields during the period of time when crops are not growing if possible. During visits to fields, the employee will:

(i) Preplan the needed supplies for daily visits including, but not limited to, a large water container/sprayer and a long-handled brush. Include a camera and airtight closable plastic bags, if plant collection is anticipated.
(ii) Park vehicles away from potential infected sites to avoid contact with soil, seeds, or diseases.
(iii) Only use equipment that is clean and free of soil, seeds, and organic matter.
(iv) Follow any quarantine restrictions directed by the landowner, APHIS, and other responsible agency. Follow biosecurity procedures as required by the landowner.
(v) Clean all equipment, shoes, and clothing of soil, seeds, or organic matter before leaving the site.
(vi) If the vehicle is contaminated with soil, seeds, or organic matter, scrub the tires and wheel wells with a brush and water before leaving the site. If the vehicle cannot be sufficiently cleaned in the field, take it to a car wash before visiting another farm/ranch. Give extra attention to cleaning the undercarriage.
(vii) Photographic images are recommended as a method of safe plant identification for unfamiliar plants.
(viii) Use an airtight closable plastic bag to carry plants or plant pests removed from the site for off-site identification. Dispose of materials identified as diseased, infested, noxious, or invasive in a manner that will prevent spreading.

403.85 Roles and Responsibilities

A. The Deputy Chief for Science and Technology is responsible for ensuring that biosecurity procedures for infectious animal and plant diseases, noxious or invasive plants, and plant pests are current.
B. Regional Assistant Chiefs are responsible for ensuring that States and Caribbean and Pacific Island Areas are familiar with the agency policy on biosecurity measures.

C. State Conservationists and the Directors of the Caribbean Area and Pacific Islands Area will:
   (i) Communicate the NRCS policy to all offices and State partners.
   (ii) Provide all NRCS offices with required equipment, materials, and information to implement biosecurity measures and preparedness.

D. District Conservationists (or designated employees responsible for local management of NRCS resources) will:
   (i) Ensure local staff follows procedures as stated above to prevent the spread of livestock and poultry diseases, plant pests, plant diseases, and noxious/invasive plants. Additional information regarding safety and health can be found in Title 360, General Manual (GM), Personnel, Part 420, Safety and Health Management Program.
   (ii) Ensure local partners and technical service providers (TSPs) are familiar with the above procedures.
   (iii) Provide a status report as requested to the appropriate line officer of activities and conditions in the local area for NRCS biosecurity preparedness and response.