

Bioterrorism and the Biosecurity Measures We Can Use to Reduce our Risks

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Anthrax, smallpox, plague and foot and mouth disease, many of these are again becoming household names due to the recent terrorist attacks on the United States.

These attacks have not only increased our awareness of bioterrorism tactics and agents, but they have also produced a large amount of quality information on the biosecurity measures we can implement to reduce the risk of a bioterrorism attack on us and our food supply.

The University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension currently has more than 15 NebGuides and NebFacts (see sidebar below) and three satellite programs (available from Saunders County Extension) that provide up-to-date information on bioterrorism and the biosecurity measures that can be implemented to protect you and your livestock.

In the following paragraphs, I will highlight some of the information presented in these publications and satellite programs.

Anthrax

In this current round of bioterrorism attacks, anthrax has been the "weapon" of choice. There is a plethora of information on anthrax and the best resource I have found is the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) Web site on bioterrorism which is www.unmc.edu/bioterrorism/. This site provides a large amount of information on anthrax and other potential bioterrorism diseases and tactics.

Dr. Steven Hinrichs is a professor and director in charge of the Nebraska Public Health Laboratory located at the Medical Center in Omaha. He is considered an expert in the bioterrorism field and on this Web site he offers some advice for individuals concerned about anthrax.

Hinrichs states, "Influenza virus infection kills several thousand people each year and it is a much more significant threat

• If there is an unrecognizable return address, especially if the return address and postmark do not match.

In either case, throw the mail away immediately. Finally, if you would happen to open an envelope with a suspicious substance in it, **do not** take the envelope to the authorities. Call the authorities and have them come get it.

Another thing to consider is

California. The most recent outbreak in Nebraska was isolated to 23 animals on one operation.

Similar to humans, these animals were given a high amount of antibiotics which were extremely effective. All animals that did perish were buried so that the anthrax would not spread to more animals or humans. It is reassuring to know that there is a standard operating procedure in place here in Nebraska to fight an anthrax outbreak in our state's livestock.

Small-Pox and Plague

There was a great deal of information presented on the UNMC satellite conference about small-pox disease and the plague. It would suggest that even though they should be considered a threat, the likelihood of a bioterrorism attack using small-pox or the plague is very unlikely for many reasons.

Regardless, there are several precautions being taken and plans being developed to minimize the impact of an attack using these diseases. For more detailed information on these diseases, please contact your local physician or you can refer to the UNMC satellite program on the Web at www.unmc.edu/bioterrorism/minimed.htm or available at Saunders County Extension.

Bioterrorism and Livestock (Ag-Terrorism)

This spring, thousands of animals were slaughtered throughout Great Britain because of foot and mouth disease. Even though it never reached the United States, it did provide a warning for many livestock producers who were not practicing

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This feedlot is one of many in the region already implementing biosecurity measures.

to people in Nebraska. We currently do not have a single case of anthrax in Nebraska. Even traffic accidents are a bigger concern."






Even though this is true, during the recent satellite program held at UNMC, one panelist suggested, "If you ever needed a reason to throw away junk mail immediately, now you have one." During this satellite, two biosecurity recommendations were made for the immediate disposal of mail.

• If there is no return address on the piece of mail.

the threat of our livestock to an anthrax attack or outbreak. I feel obligated to inform you there was an anthrax outbreak in a western Nebraska cattle herd in 1994. This **was not an act of bioterrorism**, but a natural occurrence that has happened several times in Nebraska's history due to the rare presence of anthrax spores in our soils.

This is not limited to Nebraska as it happens throughout the United States, most recently occurring this spring in North Dakota and this fall in

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Biosecurity Related NebGuides and NebFacts

The following NebGuides and NebFacts are available on the Web at www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/index.htm or through your local Cooperative Extension office. In Lancaster County, call 441-7180 or stop by the office at 444 Cherrycreek Road.

- Biosecurity: Protecting Your Health and the Health of Your Animals (NF484)
- Protecting Livestock From Terrorism (NF492)
- Biosecurity Basics for Cattle Operations and Good Management Practices for Controlling Infectious Diseases (G1411)
- Biosecurity Principles for Livestock Producers (G1442)
- Guarding Against Contagious Livestock Diseases From Farm Visitors (NF471)
- Attending Fairs: Safeguarding Your Health and Nebraska's Livestock Industry (NF483)
- Selection and Use of Disinfectants (G1410)
- Biosecurity and Disease Prevention for the Ratite Grower (G1206)
- Information About Foot and Mouth Disease for Nebraska Residents (NF454)
- Information About Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy for Nebraska Residents (NF455)
- "Banned Mammalian Protein"—What Does it Mean? (NF482)
- Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome Virus (G1286)
- Observations From Anthrax Outbreak in Sheridan County Herd (NF128)
- Control and Eradication of Pseudorabies in Swine (G848)

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