

M. BOVIS - INFORMATION FOR GRAZIERS

Mycoplasma bovis (*M. bovis*) is a bacterium that causes mastitis, arthritis, and pneumonia. It is spread via nose to nose and direct physical contact between cattle. The following tips will help you protect the cattle under your care from the spread of this and other diseases.

1. BOUNDARIES AND GATES

Maintain your fences and gates to secure your boundaries. Have one main entrance to your property. Prevent gate opening by animal activity or human visitors. Create 2m buffer zones along all fence lines to prevent cattle contact. This includes roadways and lanes.

Do not graze multiple herds in one paddock. If unavoidable, create a semi-permanent double fence using rows of warratahs 2m apart, and graze cattle away from each other. Use the feed in buffer zones before or after cattle are on both sides of the fence.

2. YARDS

Yards are contaminated with fluid from the noses and mouths of cattle during periods of heavy use. Poorly maintained yards become covered in muck and are hard to disinfect. Maintain your yards now to keep them as clean and dry as possible. Ask herd owners to do tasks such as tagging, vaccinating, and drenching at the home farm to reduce use of your yards.

Work with herd owners so cattle from the same herd arrive during a morning, afternoon, or day, without having contact with other herds. Consider using portable ramps to offload. If you share your yards with a neighbour, have a discussion now about how shared use will work this winter.

Disinfection of surfaces is less important than preventing direct cattle contact. Allowing a delay between groups of arriving cattle of a day can let sunshine and wind do much of the work, and reduces the need for disinfection. If disinfectants are used, ensure the surfaces being sprayed are clean and use a bactericidal product that is safe for you, the cows, and the environment. Your vet or local farm supply store can recommend a suitable product

3. SICK/INJURED STOCK

Have a shared agreement with herd owners that skinny, lame, and otherwise unwell animals will stay at their home property. Make a plan now for how you will deal with sick or injured stock (call the vet, mark/record/separate/treat, send home).

Under no circumstances should sick or injured animals from multiple herds be mixed into one mob.

4. MACHINERY

The risk of *M. bovis* transmission by machinery at grazing is low. Machinery can be contaminated by saliva when licked by curious cattle. Park farm bikes outside of paddocks when shifting fences and feeders. Avoid leaving tractors and wagons sitting in paddocks. Remember that if you choose to disinfect something, disinfection doesn't work unless the surface has been cleaned first.

5. FEEDERS AND TROUGHS

Ringer feeders get covered in saliva. Keep feeders and troughs in the same herd for the grazing season. Make sure staff are aware of the saliva contamination as they move between mobs. Depending on the gloves worn, it may or may not be practical to disinfect the hands/gloves between mobs.

6. LANES

The main risk posed by lanes is cattle on the other side of the fences. Make sure your 2m buffer zones are in place between all groups of cattle, including along lanes and roadways.

7. VISITORS AND BIOSECURITY

Visitors, gumboots, dogs and vehicles are potential sources of many diseases and pests. Having a sign at the entrance to your property that directs unexpected visitors to stay on the farm track and ring a farm owner or manager is a sensible general biosecurity strategy. Being prepared for visitors with spare gumboots and overalls, or having a disinfection station for boots when people enter and leave your property, can also be helpful. A 'clean on, clean off' policy for visitors and their gear will minimise the risk of transferring diseases and pests between farms. Consider involving your vet or other biosecurity expert in the development of your farm biosecurity plan.

8. FARM TEAM

It is good practice to involve your staff with the planning of procedures on your farm. Create Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) so the team has a clear understanding of expectations during most situations.

