

# Building the Foundations of Biosecurity on BC Dairy Farms

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Protecting animal health is one of the most important responsibilities for dairy producers. In British Columbia, a series of practical, hands-on “Building Blocks of Biosecurity” workshops have been delivered to dairy farmers to strengthen on-farm preparedness against disease risks. These sessions are led by Erin Cuthbert, Dairy Inspector with the BC Ministry of Agriculture, and Morgan Sangster, Producer Support Manager with BC Dairy, and bring together local veterinarians and producers to focus on practical disease prevention strategies.

The goal of the workshops is simple: provide dairy farmers with the knowledge and tools needed to develop or strengthen their **on-farm biosecurity plans**, while reinforcing the importance of traceability and herd management practices that protect the broader dairy industry.

## Understanding Animal Health Risks

Each workshop begins with presentations from **local veterinarians**, who provide valuable insight into current and emerging animal health threats facing the dairy industry. These sessions focus on diseases that can significantly impact dairy herds, including infectious diseases that may spread rapidly if biosecurity measures are not in place.

Veterinarians discuss several key topics, including:

- **Common disease threats affecting dairy cattle**
- **The potential impact on herd health and productivity**



- **How diseases are transmitted, such as through animal movement, people, equipment, feed, and wildlife**

- **Vaccination options and preventative health strategies**

These discussions help producers understand how quickly diseases can move between farms and how proactive management can significantly reduce risk. For many producers, hearing real examples from veterinary professionals helps reinforce the importance of implementing strong preventative measures.

## Building a Farm-Specific Biosecurity Plan

A key component of the workshops is helping producers understand how to develop and strengthen their own biosecurity plans. Biosecurity is not a one-size-fits-all approach; every farm has different risks depending on its location, layout, herd size, and management practices.

To help producers visualize risk points on their operations, each participant is provided

with large printed Premises Identification (PID) maps of their farm. These maps allow producers to physically review their farm layout and identify areas where disease could potentially enter or spread.

During the workshop, Erin Cuthbert and Morgan Sangster guide producers through the core components of a biosecurity plan, including:

- **Controlled access points for visitors, vehicles, and equipment**
- **Designated clean and dirty zones within the farmyard**
- **Cleaning & Disinfection station set up**
- **Visitor Log – Having one – and making people use it.**

Using their PID maps, producers work through these concepts and identify potential improvements to their current farm management practices. This interactive approach allows farmers to leave the workshop with practical ideas they can immediately apply on their operations.

## Strengthening Traceability

Another important focus of the workshops is traceability, a critical component of both disease response and food system integrity. Traceability ensures that animals can be quickly identified and tracked in the event of a disease outbreak or food safety issue. DairyTrace tracks cattle movement and in the event of a disease outbreak, allows authorities to quickly determine where animals have moved and which farms may be affected.

Workshop discussions emphasize the importance of maintaining an **accurate and up-to-date herd inventory**, including proper animal identification and movement reporting. Keeping records current ensures that producers are prepared if traceability information is needed quickly during a disease investigation.

## Practical Tools for Long-Term Protection

The feedback from producers attending the workshops has been positive. Many farmers appreciate the opportunity to review their biosecurity plans in a practical setting and discuss real-world challenges with industry experts.

By combining veterinary expertise, farm-specific planning tools, and clear guidance on traceability and disease prevention, the Building Blocks of Biosecurity workshops are helping dairy producers strengthen the resilience of their farms.

In an industry where animal health is directly tied to productivity, sustainability, and public trust, these workshops provide producers with the knowledge and confidence needed to protect their herds – and the broader dairy sector.



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