



The 21st International Society for Animal Hygiene Conference

One Health in Action – Innovations in Health,
Welfare and Environment
for a Sustainable Animal Production

Conference Proceedings

18-20 September 2024

Chiang Mai, Thailand

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Assessment of Biosecurity Practices in Estonian Beef Cattle Farms

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ABSTRACT

The research aimed to determine the status of biosecurity and disease control on Estonian beef cattle farms. The study utilized data from surveys of 53 beef cattle farmers in the spring of 2021. The herd sizes of the respondents varied, ranging from <10 suckler cows to larger farms with several herds, with some farms housing hundreds of suckler cows. More than half of the beef cattle farmers regularly had their cattle's health checked by a veterinarian. Visitors announced their visits in advance, enabling compliance with biosecurity requirements. Cattle farmers took care to block access to carcasses and household waste areas, both for livestock and other animals. Only <25% of farmers had not introduced any cattle from outside the herd within five years. The remaining farms were exposed to diseases through imported cattle. While most farmers confirmed the implementation of health checks on imported cattle, in >50% of cases, these checks were conducted by the owners themselves. The competence of owners in terms of biosecurity and animal health could pose a risk factor. Most farmers determined the severity of the disease themselves. Cattle with veterinary information were purchased by >50% of companies, and imported animals passed quarantine. Cattle with unknown health status were kept separately from calves, pregnant cows, and heifers. Farms implemented a limited number of activities requiring disinfection, cleaning, or the use of protective clothing. The level of herd vaccination was also low. Although the law mandates a risk analysis, most farms lack one, including the sections concerning biological hazards. The modest implementation of biosecurity measures in the beef cattle sector may not necessarily stem from an unwillingness to address biosecurity; rather, it could be attributed to lagging economic opportunities and organizational capacity. Although biosecurity measures do not demand significant investments and are easy to implement, state support would be beneficial.

Keywords: biosecurity, disease control, disinfection, beef

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