# If it can move, it can carry pests, diseases and weeds! On-farm biosecurity-Top 5 Tips

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There are many pathways through which diseases, pests and weed seeds can enter your property, or move from one part of a farm to another. Some of these are difficult to control, like birds and animals spreading weed seeds, but many risks can be managed and controlled by implementing a few simple processes. It's all about reducing risk.

#### 1. Signage

Anyone entering your property can unintentionally and unknowingly carry pests, diseases or weed seeds on their clothing, shoes or vehicles.

Putting up a biosecurity sign at your gate, with a contact phone number, is a great way to let visitors know that biosecurity is important to you and that they must report to you before they enter your property.



Figure 1.

Biosecurity signs like the one pictured to the left and printed on corflute are available from https://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/shop/ or you can download the template and get your local printer to print one from https://www. farmbiosecurity.com.au/wp-content/uploads/ 2019/03/Farm-Biosecurity-sign-900x600-V2.pdf

#### 2. Limit access to your property

Limiting where visitors can go on your property can greatly reduce the risk of introducing pests, diseases and weeds. Ideally there should be only one entry point for visitors to access the property, although this is not always possible. If there is more than one access point, signage as described above should be placed at each point, if possible.

Having a designated visitor parking area with clear signage, that is separate from the production areas, is a great way to reduce the risk of vehicles introducing pests, diseases or weed seeds. If the parking area has a gravel surface even better, as that will decrease the risk of movement of contaminated soil.

If your business has a tourism component, like pick your own berries, you need to clearly state entry requirements - where to park and where customers can and cannot go - and be extra vigilant in checking for new pests and diseases.

If possible, get visitors who need to access the production areas, such as agronomists or pest scouts, to use your farm vehicles rather than their own vehicles which may have been on other properties.

#### 3. Know who has been on your property

Having a visitor register for visitors to sign is a good way to ensure you know who has been on your property and when. It also shows visitors that you are serious about your farm biosecurity.

Knowing who has entered your property allows possible sources of diseases, pests and weeds to be tracked. An example is shown below.



Figure 2.

This can be downloaded as a template from https://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Visitor-register-cotton-grains-fruit-and-nuts.pdf or you can make your own.

### 4. Hygiene

Practising good hygiene on-farm will go a long way towards limiting the entry and spread of pests and diseases.

Establish a designated wash down area away from production areas. Ensure any borrowed machinery, machinery purchased second-hand or machinery belonging to contractors who operate across multiple farms is thoroughly cleaned before being used on your property.

Check regularly for new weeds or pests around the wash down area and treat accordingly. Make sure visitors to your property are aware that their vehicles, clothing and shoes should be clean before entering your property. You could consider having a foot bath for visitors to use prior to entering production areas, or supply them with disposable boot covers.

A foot bath can be as simple as a plastic tray filled with disinfectant (several options are available, talk to your chemical reseller) that visitors step in after washing off excessive dirt in your wash down area. Disposable boot covers are available on-line or from safety wear retailers.

## 5. Limit the spread of pests, diseases and weeds within your property

If you have areas of disease within your property, like a soil borne disease such as Charcoal Rot, or a rust, it is important to limit spread from infected areas to 'clean' areas.

Fungal spores, bacteria, weed seeds and even insects can be introduced into a crop by people, machinery, tools, picking carriers - basically anything that moves!

While it is hard to control everything, you can reduce the risk of spreading pests and diseases by ensuring that, wherever possible, workers, equipment and machinery move from areas of low pest or disease incidence to areas of high pest or disease incidence. This can help to limit the transfer of pests and diseases within the property. When this is not possible, machinery, tools, and clothing should be thoroughly cleaned in between.

These simple tips can help to avoid entry and spread of pests, diseases and weeds on your farm. Implementing any of these measures will help to reduce biosecurity risks on your property.

Putting procedures in place to reduce biosecurity risks is cumulative – every step you take will build on the previous steps, and decrease the risk of new pests, diseases and weeds entering your farm.

If you would like more information on biosecurity planning go to farmbiosecurity.com.au which is a joint initiative of Plant Health Australia and Animal Health Australia. A biosecurity planner can be downloaded from the website to help you implement an on-farm biosecurity plan.



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