



Weathering the Storm: Building Resilience Against Foreign Animal Diseases

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Overview

Foreign animal diseases (FADs) can disrupt every level of the cattle industry. An outbreak often means halted animal movements, market instability and unexpected costs. While these events are beyond our control, preparation is not. Ranchers who plan ahead will be better equipped to keep their businesses running and recover quickly. A strong continuity of business (COB) plan rests on three essential pillars.

The Three Pillars of Continuity of Business

1 Financial Viability

Why it matters: An FAD outbreak can cause immediate price drops, loss of export markets and reduced domestic demand. Without a financial cushion, operations can quickly become unsustainable.

Expanded actions:

- **Expect volatility:** Prepare for sudden market swings and reduced cattle values. Build a financial model that accounts for worst-case scenarios.
- **Plan for lean times:** Establish an emergency fund to cover feed, labor and essential supplies for at least 30-60 days. Review cash flow projections regularly.
- **Protect your investment:** Explore insurance options such as livestock risk protection and business interruption coverage. Understand what is covered and what is not.
- **Budget for biosecurity:** Enhanced disease prevention measures require time and money. Plan for additional costs like disinfectants, signage and labor for cleaning protocols.
- **Flexibility matters:** Review contracts with buyers and suppliers to allow adjustments during emergencies. Include clauses for delayed delivery or alternative arrangements.

2 Adaptive Management

Why it matters: Movement restrictions can disrupt normal routines for feeding, breeding and marketing. Flexibility ensures animal health and business continuity.

Expanded actions:

- **Know your herd and resources:** Maintain accurate records of cattle locations, age groups and health status. Keep updated inventories of feed, water and essential supplies.
- **Prepare for movement restrictions:** Identify backup grazing areas if you are a producer that rotates animals across multiple locations. Have a plan for cattle that cannot be shipped or moved.
- **Feed planning:** Develop alternative rations using locally available feedstuffs to stretch supplies. Work with a nutritionist to create diets that maintain health while conserving resources.
- **Breeding adjustments:** Have a contingency plan if semen or embryo transport is delayed. Consider extending breeding windows or using natural service if artificial insemination is disrupted.
- **Train your team:** Cross-train staff for essential tasks like feeding, health checks and biosecurity enforcement. Create a clear chain of command for outbreak scenarios.



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3 Biosecurity

Why it matters: Disease spread often occurs through people, vehicles and equipment. Strong biosecurity measures reduce risk and help qualify for movement permits.

Expanded actions:

- **Strengthen barriers:** Define entry points and create a line of separation (LOS) to keep disease out. Use signage, gates and physical barriers to enforce boundaries.
- **Control traffic:** Limit visitors and vehicles. Set up cleaning and disinfection stations for anything crossing the LOS.
- **Track everything:** Maintain logs of all people, equipment and deliveries entering your operation. Record where they came from and what they contacted.
- **Plan for waste and mortality:** Develop strategies for carcass disposal. Louisiana revised statute 3:2131 governs carcass disposal methods. Identify locations on your property that are suitable for deep burial of animals.

What to Expect During a Foreign Animal Disease (FAD) Outbreak

- **Nationwide standstill:** Animal and germplasm movement will stop immediately.
- **Permits required:** Movement will resume only under strict regulatory oversight.
- **Compliance is key:** Operations must meet biosecurity and traceability requirements to qualify for movement permits.

Action Steps

- Draft a written contingency plan covering these pillars.
- Work with your veterinarian to create a daily and enhanced biosecurity plan.
- Reach out to your local extension office for assistance in creating or reviewing your COB plan or drafting a biosecurity plan.

For more information, visit the Secure Beef Supply website at www.securebeef.org