

Steps to Safely Introducing Animals to the Herd



This information can be used to help create a Biosecurity Plan for your farm.

Every farm should have its own risk assessment which is used to develop its own action plan. Keeping a closed herd by never buying in, borrowing or hiring any outside cattle is one of the best ways to keep diseases out of your farm and is strongly recommended.

However, we appreciate that there are times when it is not possible to keep a closed herd.

Bringing cattle into a herd carries a high risk of introducing infectious disease. This document outlines practical options to help reduce the risk of introducing diseases to your herd.

Even when all the following steps are taken, the risk of bringing in disease cannot be eliminated entirely. Purchasing cattle will remain one of the most likely ways that you will introduce disease into your farm.

STEP 1

HAVE A PLAN

- Have a checklist of questions to ask the vendor about the animals.
- We would discourage impulse buying and advocate forward thinking.
- Be wary of an animal that looks like a bargain.

STEP 2

BUY FROM AS FEW HERDS AS POSSIBLE

- Ideally purchase from one herd. Every time you add animal to the herd the potential issues increase almost exponentially.

STEP 3

BUY AS FEW ANIMALS AS POSSIBLE

- All additional animals add extra pressure to the herd. 5 is better than 10.
- Plan how many you need before purchasing.

STEP 4

SELECT LOWEST RISK HERDS

- Select a herd with at least the same health status as your own, higher if possible.
- Select a closed herd or one in a Health Scheme.
- Buy from a person you trust – consider who you are buying from as well as the animals.
- Buy from a system – view the system on farm or ask how the animals have been reared.
- Consider buying from someone who does not buy in animals, a closed herd or breeder.

STEP 5

SOURCE LOWEST RISK CATEGORY OF ANIMALS

- Unbred animals.
- Younger animals.
- Know their health/vaccination status.
- Do they look the correct weight for their age – consider how they have been reared/fed.

STEP 6

REDUCE TRANSPORT RISKS

- Ensure the vehicle is clean and disinfected before use.
- Do not allow the animals you are buying to mix with others in the transport.
- Transport directly from the vendor's farm/mart to your farm.
- Unload into the quarantine area.

STEP 7

PLAN TO GIVE THE ANIMALS A "SOFT LANDING" ON ARRIVAL ONTO YOUR HOLDING

- Before purchasing, plan for the animal's arrival onto your farm.
- Identify quarantine shed/field where they can be completely isolated from the rest of the herd.
- If possible, provide the same nutrition they were receiving on their previous holding.
- Provide shelter, clean water and food.
- If housed on arrival, ensure air quality is good.
- If at grass, ensure sufficient quantity and quality.
- Health testing / medications plan on arrival.

