



Topic 2. Records and Identification

Records and animal identification are foundational elements of biosecurity because they support awareness, traceability, and informed decision-making. Even in very small or informal livestock operations, basic records can help clarify what animals are present, where they came from, and how they have moved over time.

Identification refers to any method used to distinguish individual animals or defined groups of animals. This may include official identification systems, farm-specific identifiers, or informal methods commonly used in small operations. From a biosecurity perspective, identification supports the ability to recognize changes, track movement, and understand potential pathways for disease introduction or spread.

In Ohio, one location-based component of livestock identification is the Premises Identification (PID) system. A PID is associated with a physical location where livestock are housed, managed, or congregated, rather than with individual animals. The PID system provides a consistent reference point tied to geography, which can support recordkeeping and communication if animals move on or off a property or if animal health questions arise.

In general terms, a PID is obtained by registering a livestock premises with the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Registration is typically completed by submitting basic information about the location, such as the address or geographic description of the premises, the types of livestock present, and contact information for the person responsible for the animals. Once registered, the location is assigned a unique PID number. From an educational perspective, the PID functions as a location identifier that can be referenced in records without requiring changes to day-to-day animal management.

Recordkeeping complements identification by providing context. Common records may include animal acquisitions, movement between pens or pastures, health observations, breeding information, or mortalities. These records do not need to be complex to be useful. In many settings, brief notes kept consistently provide more value than detailed systems that are difficult to maintain or are used only intermittently.

Records are most effective when they reflect what an operation can reasonably sustain. Writing down key events as they occur, even in simple form, can preserve information that might otherwise be forgotten or misremembered. Over time, these entries can help establish a baseline of normal activity and make unusual patterns easier to notice.

Records can also support communication. When questions arise about animal health or potential exposure, having written or digital information can make discussions with veterinarians, diagnostic laboratories, or regulatory

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agencies more efficient. In some situations, records help distinguish between expected variation and events that may warrant closer attention.

From an educational perspective, records and identification are best understood as tools that support situational awareness rather than compliance. Different operations use different approaches based on species, scale, and local practices. Biosecurity education therefore focuses on why records and identification matter, rather than prescribing specific systems, formats, or methods. Species-specific identification practices, including tagging, are addressed separately.

References

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