

# The Healthy Swine Herd Series: Show Biosecurity



**Kaylyn Rudy**, SDSU Extension Swine Field Specialist

**Rafe Royall**, Assistant Professor & SDSU Extension Swine Specialist

**Bob Thaler**, Farm Credit Services of America Endowed Chair in Swine Production, Distinguished Professor & SDSU Extension Swine Specialist

**Russ Daly**, Professor, SDSU Extension Veterinarian, State Public Health Veterinarian

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Biosecurity is, ever evolving and can be a tricky world to navigate, and when you are taking your pig to a show, things become even more complicated. You have worked hard and are so excited to finally take your pig to a show that biosecurity may not be the first thing on your mind. However, biosecurity is just as important at a show as it is on the farm. Pigs from different farms are being brought together, and in some cases, for an extended period of time. This is the perfect opportunity for diseases to strike! It is your responsibility as the exhibitor, owner, or parent of exhibitor to be the first line of defense for your pig. Additionally, it is the responsibility of the show staff/committee to have the best biosecurity practices in place.

When it comes to show biosecurity, there are a few steps you as an exhibitor can take to help reduce the biosecurity threats to your pigs at a show. Remember, diseases can be transmitted directly from one pig to another, and indirectly through objects and even the air.

## At Home

Biosecurity starts at home. From the moment you bring home a prospect pig, or a litter is born at home, biosecurity is key to maintaining overall health and wellness and sets your pig up for success. Make sure to establish a biosecurity plan and acquire all the proper equipment to implement it effectively prior to any animal arrivals. This equipment includes disinfectants, scrub brushes, hoses, pressure washers etc. It is also important to contain any potential diseases on your

farm. If you suspect that a pig is sick, do not bring it to a show and risk exposing everyone else's animals to a disease.

## Swine Housing

Housing is extremely important for your show animals' health and wellbeing. Not only should proper housing keep your pig protected from the elements, but it should also keep pests and other wildlife out as well. Pests such as birds can carry diseases over great distances, and wildlife such as feral hogs can have devastating consequences through disease transmission.

Additionally, make sure the pig's space has been thoroughly disinfected, including any feeders, waterers, and equipment that may come into contact with your new pig.

## Quarantining New Stock & After Shows

Upon returning home from the show or bringing home a new show prospect, it is a good idea to quarantine the new/returning pigs away from any pigs that have not left the property to limit the chances of spreading any diseases that may have come home with you. While there is limited data available on the distance a quarantine or isolation building should be from the general population regarding show animals, there are a few recommendations for a successful quarantine.

First it is important to know the difference between isolation and quarantine. Isolation is typically referred

to as separating already ill individuals away from the rest of the general population; whereas quarantine is to keep separate and restrict the movement of individuals that may have had disease exposure but are not showing symptoms (Health and Human Service, 2022 & Williams, 2020).

When setting up a quarantine facility, distance from the main facility is very important in limiting the chances of potential disease spread. Isolation and quarantine areas should be away from the main housing unit. Ideally quarantine areas should be on a different farm or site. If that's not possible, it needs to be a completely separate building and air space, and have separate equipment, food, water, etc. (Scotland's Healthy Animals). If the use of a separate building is not possible, create a buffer area of at least 6ft; the more distance the better (CFSPH, 2021). These areas should be easy to clean and disinfect (CFSPH, 2021). Bedding and manure should be removed regularly to reduce the spread of pathogens and removal tools should be kept separate (CFSPH, 2021). Whether it is new or returning animals, animals in quarantine should be chored last and with separate equipment to minimize the potential of carrying diseases between groups. The rule of thumb is to always do chores starting with the "cleanest" animals and working your way to the "dirtiest" ones. The individual who is caring for quarantined animals should wear different clothing and shoes when in the quarantine space.

Different diseases have different lengths of incubation and shedding periods, which then impacts the length of quarantine or isolation. For example, pigs need at least 7 days downtime to get through shedding influenza virus (Shike, 2025). As a general rule, it is recommended that new animals or returning show animals be quarantined for at least 21 days (Ockert, 2017, USDA: APHIS, 2025). Due to variability in quarantine timelines and disease transmission, it is a good idea to contact your veterinarian to help you create a quarantine/isolation plan for your pigs and farm.

## **VCPR & Vaccination**

The veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) is the relationship between you and your animal's healthcare provider. It is important to have a positive, honest relationship with your vet because they are the most important person in establishing a biosecurity plan.

Falling in line with VCPR is swine vaccination. It is vital that you get the recommended vaccinations for your pig and understand the vaccine requirement for any show

well in advance, so you can vaccinate accordingly. For example, the National Swine Registry requires all breeding swine be vaccinated against erysipelas and leptospirosis. It is also highly recommended to vaccinate against swine influenza, circovirus, mycoplasma, and PRRS (Shike, 2025). Should your pig present with any signs of illness before or after the show contact your veterinarian immediately.

## **Show Equipment**

Not only can your pig bring diseases home, but so can all your equipment, vehicles, and trailer. If possible, spray your vehicle's tires with disinfectants before entering your property. Unload animals away from the main swine building so that the "dirty" vehicles do not have to get close to animal housing. After unloading, isolate your equipment and wash and disinfect it. The same applies to your vehicle and its tires. Be sure to wear shoe-covers when you arrive home or change shoes before crossing your farm's line of separation. Your line of separation is the transition line from the dirty side (anywhere outside the barn) to the clean side (the area housing the animals).

Make sure you have your own equipment. Never share or borrow anyone else's equipment, especially water/feed buckets. This is particularly important because viruses can live on surfaces for many days. Any new equipment should still be thoroughly cleaned, disinfected, dried, and quarantined before use. After the show, be sure to clean and disinfect items such as feeders, water buckets, show boxes, totes, boards, brushes, and whips. Read the directions for the disinfectants you are using and allow disinfectants to thoroughly dry.

## **Other Pigs**

Remember there are two ways disease transmission can occur: directly and indirectly. Direct transmission occurs through physical contact with another pig, feces, and even through the droplets from a sneeze, cough, or even dust (A Champions Guide to Youth Swine Exhibition, National Pork Board). Whereas indirect transmission occurs through the air, contaminated objects and feed. While, difficult in a show setting, it is best to limit the direct contact your pig has with other exhibitors' pigs. If the show allows it, lining your pig's pen with a physical barrier (i.e. tarps or sort boards) can help reduce pig-to-pig contact. If possible, showing "off the trailer" is an excellent way to keep your pig in its own environment until showtime, significantly decreasing nose-to-nose contact (Pork magazine, 2025). Check with show personnel to make sure that

showing out of your trailer is allowed. This also helps to limit not only your pig's exposure but also your equipment's exposure to outside contaminants.

For more information on exhibitor biosecurity please, reach out to your local veterinarian, the SDSU swine extension team, or The Pork Check Off. Pork Check Off has many resources regarding biosecurity, and exhibitor specific biosecurity at Biosecurity at Pig Shows - Pork Checkoff.

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