

# PUTTING A BIOSECURITY PLAN IN PLACE

DR DANIE ODENDAAL  
DIRECTOR VETERINARY NETWORK

**T**he term “biosecurity plan” often is a challenging concept for farmers, especially Nguni breeders who generally farm extensively. This results in farmers often shying away from implementing even the most basic plans.

Something the COVID pandemic amongst humans has taught us is that unless sound biosecurity systems are in place before and during a pandemic outbreak, there will be no organised and uniform management of the situation resulting in the chaos presently experienced. The same applied to and was experienced with the recent Foot and Mouth disease outbreak in the cattle industry.



After the Slenkdal fever outbreak some ten years ago, Veterinary Network introduced a national disease reporting system. The goal was to establish a fully operational system and communication channel between rural veterinarians each reporting on disease occurrence in their own district/s and their clients

The system is real-time and involves 160 veterinary practices, reporting disease or potential disease as it occurs. This results in a regional and national overview of disease occurrence as soon as observed.

Of particular importance to breeders of stud cattle is that various problematic diseases, such as Bovine brucellosis and venereal disease, such as trichomoniasis (trich), have been reported timeously because of the system.

It is important to note that the occurrence of any of the aforesaid diseases on a cattle farm renders the sale of any animals of that farm, albeit stud or commercial, illegal and provides us with a specific point of departure for a going-forward solution.

## V-PLAN

Veterinary Network approached the development of a management plan from a positive angle. The initial focus is to focus on and acknowledge stud breeders who routinely test their herds for, amongst others, the mentioned diseases and are thus able to prove that their herds are free of these diseases. Commercial herds are not excluded from the plan.

## V-PLAN works as follows:

### Level 1 participants are:

Breeders who have a designated herd veterinarian participating in the development, implementation and annual revision of a health program. The breeder is responsible for the

execution of the program, and Bengu farm can include the health program for their clients on their recording and processing system.

### Level 2 participants are:

Breeders who test their herd on recommendation of the herd veterinarian for Bovine Brucellosis and venereal diseases and declare their herd's health status regarding such diseases.

The minimum requirement here is that the herd will be visited by the herd veterinarian at least twice a year. The recommended times for such visits would be during the pregnancy testing of the cows, then again when fertility testing bulls. Bengu farm could also include recording these test results on their system for their clients.

### Level 3 participation in planning for the future:

Breeders on Level 2 will be included in the daily observation chart [pen to paper] for disease prevention and participating in disease reporting to the herd veterinarian.

Veterinary Network developed this extensive system for structured daily disease observation purposes for early detection of diseases. The system is called the "daily observation chart" and plays an integral part when the occurrence of the disease is shared and discussed telephonically with the herd veterinarian, should he/she not be available to visit the farm at that stage.

A technologically advanced system is also available, backed by an electronic mobile app for disease recording and immediate reporting to the herd veterinarian.

The herd veterinarian, therefore, receives an overview of the disease observation on his/her computer for regular, if not daily analysis. Combined with other reports, it has the advantage of timeous observation and immediate action, should it be necessary.

Veterinary Network is linked to the network of reporting veterinary practices,





able to plot a comprehensive overview of the occurrence and spread of the various diseases nationally. Of national interest is that this allows for combined disease management action to be taken when required and experienced during a recent outbreak of Foot & Mouth disease.

### Advantages of V-PLAN for stud and commercial breeders

The commercial outcome of the project is based on breeders and their designated herd veterinarians adhering to a proven biosecurity plan. The data is used for marketing purposes and accessible to buyers and sellers of live stud animals, thereby, if not eliminating, then at least limit the spread of disease amongst herds when bringing new cattle onto the farm.

### V-PLAN herds are listed on an easily accessible database consisting of the following:

*The database of participating breeders lists the breeders as follows:*

Name of breeder	Stud name	Breed	Nearest town	District	Province	Status

*Prospective buyers can enquire by way of a search engine:*

Search stud herd	Name of breeder		
	Name of stud		

and/or

Search in group	1 <sup>st</sup> search criteria	Breed	Complete criteria 1 to 3 and find – list of breeders according to criteria
	2 <sup>nd</sup> search criteria	Province	
	3 <sup>rd</sup> search criteria	Grading	

### And a screen with full details and contact information of the breeder and herd veterinarian:

BREEDER CONTACT INFORMATION	DESIGNATED HERD VETERINARIAN CONTACT DETAILS
NAME OF BREEDER	NAME OF DESIGNATED HERD VETERINARIAN
STUD NAME	PRACTICE NAME
BREED	
TEL	TEL
MOB	MOB
E-MAIL	E-MAIL
ADDRESS	
NEAREST TOWN	
DISTRICT	
PROVINCE	
GRADING	
FURTHER DESCRIPTIONS	

### How to join and participate in the plan

In the past, the biggest single limitation for developing a plan and database to benefit responsible herd health breeders was the practical use thereof by both buyers and sellers of cattle, especially where animals for breeding purposes change hands. This is no longer an issue, as the most important goal of the plan is to differentiate and acknowledge breeders who adhere to sound herd health management criteria, with the support of a herd veterinarian, on an easily accessible database, where the breeder and the herd veterinarian declare the health status of the herd. (The health status of the herd remains the responsibility of the breeder and herd veterinarian.)

Veterinary Network is using the services of Ika van Niekerk currently to coordinate and manage the project and business, going forward with limited resources.

For this plan to succeed, and for optimal effect and impact on national biosecurity, it requires as many voluntary members as possible. Our initial target is to register ±500 participants from all breeds and commercial breeders from all corners of the country.

Nguni breeders are welcome to join as voluntary participants in the plan and invited to call Ika or me, at any time, regarding the voluntary participation in this plan or have any questions regarding V-PLAN. ■

*“The basis for breeder participation in the national biosecurity standards and positive contribution to the industry value chain.”*

