You’ve heard it time and again- the U S livestock industry’s security is vulnerable. It seems, however, that message can’t be sent out often enough. In terms of what poses a risk, severely highly contagious foreign-animal diseases that could be introduced into herds and flocks top the list. Examples include foot-and-mouth disease, hog cholera, and African swine fever.

The vast amount of livestock movement in the United States greatly enhances the disease risk. Livestock producers and all others associated with the industry should be alert to unusual activities and take all possible precautions, including the physical security of operations whenever possible.

Mathematically, the risk to individual producers in terms of infectious disease spread is much higher than from actions such as direct physical attack, exposure to a toxic agent, or chemical contamination of a herd or flock. Nonetheless, producers should limit access to their operation. The following are some guidelines, found in the 2005 Pork Magazine, to implement security measures for livestock on your farm:

- Make sure all people entering any livestock operation are well identified.
- Post a sign forbidding entrance without permission.
- Have a sign-in sheet for all individuals entering a livestock operation if you must allow visitors.
- As much as possible, secure all feed and other supplies used in livestock production.
- Keep a record of all livestock, feed, and supply purchases.
- Call local law enforcement if any unusual activity is encountered or suspected.

**Learn to SCAN for tampering.**

- **See** – Train all managers and employees about what to look for in terms of suspicious people or behaviors.
- **Contact** – When anyone observes strange behaviors, you need to take steps to confirm or deny the observation’s accuracy.
- **Ask** – If you have made contact with the person in question, ask for their name and reason for being there. Ask for identification and document reason for being there.
- **Notify** – After the person has left, report encounter to appropriate person. The biggest error would be to not report the situation or to assume that your encounter was not important. Remember, the business’ security depends on everyone, not just the owner.

Unfortunately, environmental litigation against livestock producers has become more prevalent in recent years. From government enforcement of environmental regulations to nuisance lawsuits brought by neighbors, livestock producers need to be reminded of the threat of litigation protect their investment, like they do market prices and other business risks.
The best approach to avoiding a nuisance claim is to take all reasonable steps to avoid the claim, rather than defending a suit once it is filed. To minimize the potential for being sued is to “Do the Right Things” “Do Things Right” and above all “Be Nice.”

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)

SARE works primarily through competitive grants, which are offered through four regions, our region being the South, under the direction of councils that include farmers and ranchers along with representatives from universities, government, agribusiness, and nonprofit organizations. Since 1988, SARE has funded more than 3,000 projects, including Farmer/Rancher Grants, Research and Education Grants, and Professional Development Grants.

Both environmentally sound range/pasture management and agri-tourism are among the of-the-moment topics in which SARE has invested through its grants. Agri-tourism, along with local processing, direct marketing, organic farming, and community agriculture, represent some of the new approaches that are revving up profits for producers. All ways to “add value” to farming, these technologies make up the primary focus of a large number of SARE grants and are a component of scores of others. SARE’s great advantage comes in its ability – thanks to regional grant-making councils who know the local issues – to fund forward-thinking research and education subjects that keep producers on the cutting edge.

For more information about SARE contact your local Cooperative Extension Center, the Southern SARE office at the University of Georgia and Fort Valley State University at 770.412.4787 or look on the Web at www.southernsare.org

Organic Certification Cost Share Funds Available

North Carolina’s organic farmers will continue to be eligible for reimbursement for a portion of their certification costs through a federal grant program administered by the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. NCDA&CS recently received word that the US Department of Agriculture has extended a $20,000 grant to the state through 2008. Growers must submit an application for the grant or must reapply to receive the cost-share funds for re-certification. North Carolina, like the nation, has seen steady growth in organic production as consumer demand has grown. The Tar Heel state is home to about 7 certified organic producers.

Growers are eligible to receive up to 75% of their organic certification costs, up to $500 under this program. Producers and handlers selling more than $5000 of organic products in a year must be certified. USDA-accredited certifying agents and approved state organic program agents are responsible for the enforcement of national organic regulations. Farmers can apply for the funds by calling Kevin Hardison at 919.733.7136 ext. 232 for an application. Applications may also be downloaded at www.ncdaorganic.org

More information on the National Organic Program as well as a list of certifying agents is available at: www.ams.usda.gov/nop

Sincerely,

Star Jackson
Extension Agent
Agriculture