

# LIVESTOCK ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE AREAS

## BIOSECURITY TIP SHEET



Bringing new animals into a herd or flock can also bring disease. Healthy looking animals may be carrying a disease your herd or flock has never seen. Animals from your herd or flock that were off-farm and return can also bring disease. Separating new animals and watching them for sickness can prevent disease from entering your operation. This is called quarantine. Separating sick animals in your herd or flock from healthy animals can prevent disease spread. This is called isolation. Isolation and quarantine will be listed as I/Q in this Tip Sheet.

*Consider this....you buy some breeding age animals. Upon arrival, you unload them into the pen next to your young stock. Two days later, one of the newly purchased animals has a fever, runny nose, and is coughing. All of your young stock have been exposed because they share a fence line. If the new animals had been quarantined (kept separate) from your home herd, only the new animals would be at risk of disease. Quarantine helps protect your whole herd.*

### ISOLATION – WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

Animals that are sick should be isolated from healthy animals in a separate area. For example, you isolate a piglet with diarrhea or lamb that is coughing to protect the other animals in your herd or flock.

### QUARANTINE – WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

Newly purchased animals, and those returning from fairs, shows, or for breeding should be quarantined. These animals are not known to be sick. They should be separated for a period of time before contacting your “home” herd/flock. Watch them for signs of disease. If an animal in quarantine becomes sick, it only exposes the animals it already contacted. This prevents disease exposure to the rest of your animals. Livestock brought into the United States are quarantined to prevent introducing diseases.

### I/Q AREAS – WHAT SHOULD THEY LOOK LIKE?

Isolation and quarantine areas can look the same. They have two different purposes, but they have very similar goals and management. They require planning to set up. Protecting your herd/flock may also require investing in extra equipment or extra labor to clean and disinfect. Research shows preventing a disease from entering or spreading saves money in the long run.

- Because you may have both sick and new or returning animals at the same time, it is best to have two separate areas – one for isolation and one for quarantine.
- If space allows, I/Q areas should be in separate buildings, pastures, or dry lots from the rest of your herd or flock. The goal is to not share air space or fence lines.
- If it is not possible to keep isolation, quarantine, and the home herd/flock in separate areas, create a buffer zone of at least 6 feet between the I/Q areas and healthy livestock. The greater the distance between areas, the better. This buffer zone will help prevent I/Q animals from coming into close contact with any other livestock, outside animals, or wildlife.

### ISOLATION:

SICK AND SEPARATE

### QUARANTINE:

NEW, RETURNING,  
NOT SICK,  
AND SEPARATE

Isolation means for sick and separate while quarantine means for new, returning, not sick and separate.

Source: CFSPH, Iowa State University



- In a pasture or dry lot, there should be a double fence between I/Q animals and other animals on the farm. The distance between fences should be at least 6 feet, but the greater the distance, the better.
- I/Q areas should have a clean, dry area for animals to rest. Surfaces should be easy to clean and disinfect between groups of animals. For animals raised on dirt/soil, change the bedding and let the area sit empty between groups.
- Control the movement of people in and out of the I/Q areas. Workers should, at a minimum, change clothing and boots, and wash hands before leaving I/Q areas.
- The quarantine time period is based on the diseases of concern for your herd/flock. It could last 21-30 days or longer. Work with your veterinarian to develop a plan.



Cattle are within one pen and there is a second fence to prevent contact.  
Source: URUS/PEAK

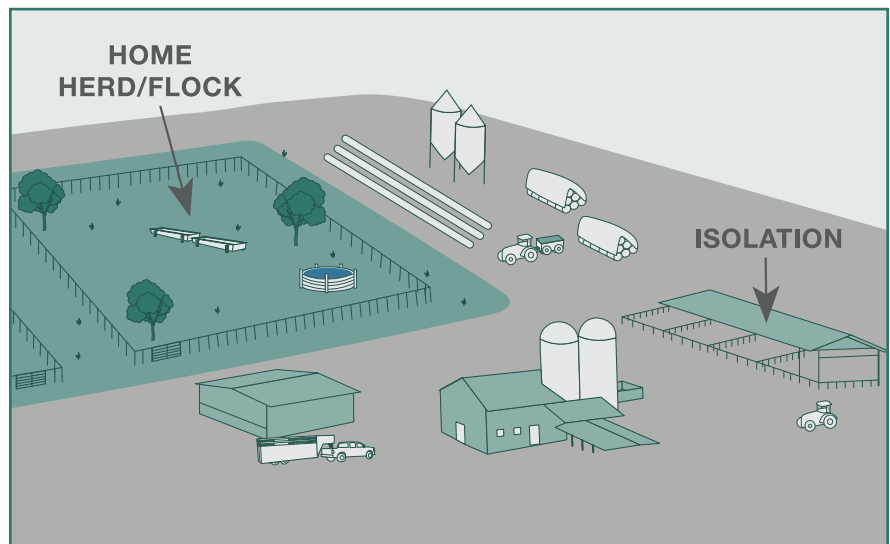
## EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES FOR I/Q AREAS

Equipment and supplies should not be shared between areas. Isolation, quarantine, and the home herd/flock should all have their own items. This includes caretaker clothing and footwear, feed and water buckets, and treatment equipment. Also separate animal handling equipment such as halters, lead ropes, sorting panels, and cleaning and disinfection supplies.

- If separate items for each area is not possible, shared equipment and supplies must be thoroughly cleaned and properly disinfected between uses to prevent disease spread.
- In the case of milking animals, quarantined animals should be milked last, after isolation animals. Take steps to clean equipment between groups to prevent spread from the sick animals to the quarantined animals.

## CARING FOR ANIMALS IN I/Q AREAS

- Ideally, have one person care for I/Q animals. This person should not have contact with other animals on the operation.
- If the same person cares for other animals, I/Q chores should be last, after all other animals.
- Quarantined animals should be observed at least daily for any signs of illness. Isolated animals may need to be checked more often.
- Talk with your veterinarian about a health plan for animals in I/Q. Giving vaccines, treating for parasites, and testing for diseases may improve animal health.
- Provide plenty of space, feed, water, quiet handling, and comfortable temperatures for animals in I/Q.
- Soiled bedding and litter from I/Q areas should be handled as contaminated. Keep it away from healthy animals. Options are listed in the Tip Sheet: Manure, Litter and Bedding Management at [cfsph.iastate.edu/biosecurity](https://cfsph.iastate.edu/biosecurity). Follow local and state regulations when disposing of bedding and litter.



Isolation area away from the home herd/flock is cared for last.  
Source: CFSPH, Iowa State University



## ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Use the following checklist to determine areas where you are doing well and others that need to improve.

YES	NO	After answering, pick one or two “No” answers and make an improvement plan with the resources below.
		Do your animals have a clean, dry place to rest?
		Do animal caretakers check animals often for signs of disease?
		Do you have a separate area to isolate sick animals?
		Do animal caretakers work with the healthiest and youngest animals first, then older animals, then sick animals last?
		Are new or returning animals separated (quarantined) from all other livestock for a period of time before mixing with your home herd/flock?
		Is separate feed and water equipment used for new or returning animals?

### MORE RESOURCES:

[Biosecurity in Small-scale U.S. Livestock Operations](#). U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[Healthy Farms Healthy Agriculture: Isolation](#). Healthy Farms Healthy Agriculture.

[Quarantine and Isolation](#). Scotland’s Healthy Animals.

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