

# 4 ways to minimize disease during expansion

By Kimberlee Schoonmaker

Use these practices to avoid a disease outbreak when you bring new animals into your herd.

**P**rior to an expansion at Maple Lawn Farms, Dan and John Wolf decided to take proactive measures to

minimize the chance of Johne's disease entering their herd. With that in mind, this father-and-son team from Lyons, N.Y., enrolled in a cattle health

assurance program before adding 62 cows to their 125-cow herd.

With the help of their herd veterinarian and a field veterinarian with the

New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, the Wolfs established a biosecurity protocol.

As part of the program, they screened prospective cows for Johne's and selected animals for purchase based on the results of *continued on page 32*

John Wolf (right) of Maple Lawn Farms in Lyons, N.Y., worked closely with his herd veterinarian, Tom Smithling (left) and Pepi Leids (center), a field veterinarian with the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, to reduce the chances of Johne's getting into the herd during an expansion in 1998.



ELISA blood tests. “We were just trying to be as up-front preventive as we could,” says Dan Wolf.

You, too, can use preventive measures to minimize the entry of disease when animals enter your dairy. Consider using the following strategies.

### 1 Screen animals for disease

One way to ward off disease during an expansion is to purchase animals that have a low risk of harboring diseases. A good way to accomplish this is to screen animals for disease, such as Johne’s, bovine viral diarrhea (BVD) and leukosis, prior to purchasing them, says Ann Wilkinson, a technical services veterinarian with Pfizer Animal Health.

When Tim and Dan Liner of Van Dyne, Wis., expanded their herd from 70 to 130 cows in 1998, they used preventive testing to determine the health status of the herd they wanted to purchase. The Liners screened the prospective herd for BVD and Johne’s disease before purchasing the animals. “We were trying to be as cautious as possible to minimize the entry of disease onto our dairy,” notes Dan Liner.

In some states, programs exist which can help you minimize the entry of disease onto your dairy. One such example is the New York State Cattle Health Assurance Program (NYSCHAP) which the Wolfs in New York enrolled in prior to their expansion, and which they continue to use on their dairy.

As part of the program, the Wolfs developed a herd biosecurity plan with the help of Tom Smithling, their herd veterinarian, and Pepi



At Larson Acres in Evansville, Wis., this skid steer is used to clean up feed refusals only. A different skid steer is used to handle manure. Biosecurity practices such as this help minimize the transfer of disease through contaminated manure. That’s especially important to the Larson family as they continue to expand their herd to 1,250 cows this fall.

Leids, a field veterinarian who implements the NYSCHAP program in seven New York counties. Currently, more than 300 New York producers participate in the voluntary program. Like the Wolfs, these producers implement biosecurity practices — and, in some cases, use disease testing — to reduce the introduction and spread of BVD, Johne’s or salmonella on their dairies. New York producers can enroll in the program by contacting the New York State Division of Animal Industry at (518) 457-3502, or access the web site at: <http://nyschap.vet.cornell.edu>

### 2 Use culturing

Purchased animals can carry contagious mastitis pathogens, such as *Staph. aureus*, *Strep. ag* and *Mycoplasma bovis*, into your herd. To identify the presence of contagious pathogens, take individual milk samples from all of the cows in the herd that you plan to purchase, or pull three bulk tank samples from the herd — each three to four days apart. If the results of a culture identify

### CHECK OUT THESE BIOSECURITY RESOURCES

The following publications are available to help you minimize the threat of a disease outbreak during an expansion. Use them to refresh your biosecurity program prior to an expansion, or to train employees on disease prevention.

■ **An Introduction to Infectious Disease Control on Farms (Biosecurity)** is a four-page publication which explains the importance of biosecurity and lists control measures of a biosecurity program. It is available from the Bovine Alliance on Management and Nutrition (BAMN). Contact Dorann Towery at (703) 524-0810.

■ **Biosecurity on Dairies**

includes a four-step process to help you identify the risk of infection or a disease outbreak on your dairy. The four-page guide also discusses implementation of biosecurity programs. To receive a copy, contact Dorann Towery at (703) 524-0810.

■ **Biosecurity — Profit for the Taking** is a publication which is designed to help you assess weak areas and take corrective measures to improve biosecurity. It is available from the Dairy Quality Assurance Center (DQA) for \$3.50, plus shipping. To order a copy, call DQA at (800) 553-2479, or visit the web site at: [www.dqacenter.org/catalog.htm](http://www.dqacenter.org/catalog.htm)

animals infected with *Strep. ag* or *Mycoplasma*, then avoid buying animals from that herd, says Dave Wilson, veterinarian at New York’s Quality Milk Promotion Services Laboratory. In the case of *Staph. aureus*, it’s not always possible to find herds free of this organism. Therefore, purchase negative animals from a herd.

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## FOUR WAYS TO MINIMIZE DISEASE



Prior to an expansion at Maple Lawn Farms in Lyons, N.Y., owners Dan and John Wolf enrolled in a biosecurity program, known as the New York State Cattle Health Assurance Program. As part of the program, the Wolfs' veterinarian, Tom Smithling, blood tested cattle prior to purchase to minimize the risk of Johne's disease.

expansion at Larson Acres in Evansville, Wis., the Larson family was able to avoid problems by culturing bulk tank samples from prospective herds for three days in a row. Fortunately, the culturing results came back negative. In addition, the Larsons analyzed the somatic cell count history of the herds they wanted to buy and spoke directly with each herd's veterinarian, says Mike Larson, dairy manager at the 1,700-cow dairy. "Reputation is very important to us when we are buying animals," he adds.

**3** Isolate new arrivals  
During an expansion, you put two groups of animals at risk — the animals you buy and the animals already present at your dairy. To protect both groups, isolate new arrivals for at least three weeks, recommends Wilkinson, the veterinarian with Pfizer Animal Health.

During an expansion at Gold Dust Dairy in De Pere, Wis., a 119-cow free-stall pen served as the isolation area for new arrivals to the dairy, says Brian Micke, a partner at the 1,000-cow operation. Because the dairy expanded gradually, it had plenty of room to isolate new arrivals and prevent them from coming in contact with animals already present on the dairy.

Larson Acres followed a similar isolation plan while purchasing animals. During the isolation period, the Larsons milked the new animals last in the milking string for at least two weeks to prevent contagious mastitis from spreading to the home herd.

**4** Establish a vaccination protocol

During an expansion, vaccinate animals properly before bringing them into your herd and make sure the animals already present at your dairy are up to speed on their vaccinations, recommends Wilkinson.

To do so, work closely with your herd veterinarian to establish a vaccination program which fits your dairy's needs.

That was one of the keys to a successful expansion at Maple Lawn Farms in New York. With the help of Smithling, their herd veterinarian, the Wolfs vaccinated animals at their farm for BVD, IBR, PI3, BRSV, leptospirosis and pasteurilla prior to introducing new cattle. Then, they vaccinated the animals they planned to purchase three weeks before they transported them to Maple Lawn Farms. They followed this initial vaccination with a booster dose one week before the animals arrived at their dairy. "It's something we wanted done and we were more than willing to pay for it," Smithling says.

If you choose not to vaccinate the incoming animals, it's a good idea to obtain a statement, signed by the herd's veterinarian, which indicates when the herd was vaccinated and what vaccines were given, Smithling adds.

Don't let diseases sneak onto your dairy during a herd expansion. Instead, use these biosecurity measures to get your expansion started off on the right foot. 