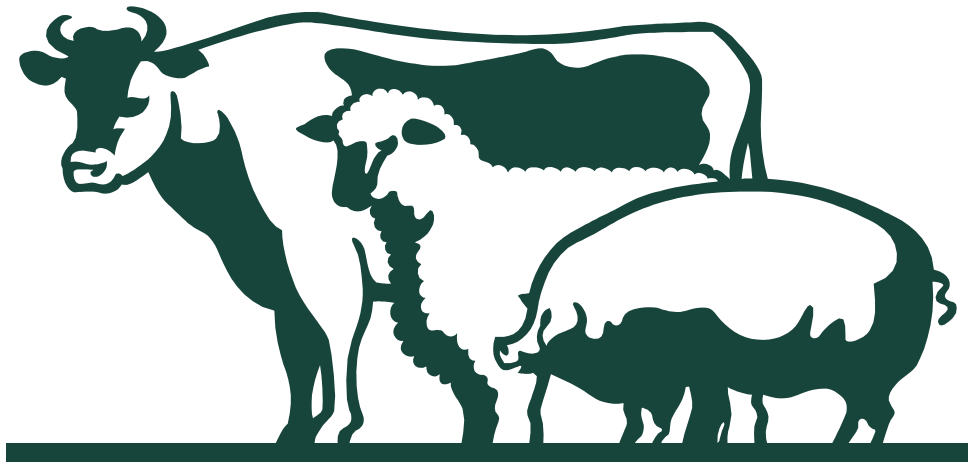# Livestock and Food Production

Livestock that are in close proximity to food production areas can pose significant food safety risks. With proper mitigation strategies, the two can coexist. Without these mitigation strategies, passing an audit will be difficult.

This guidance document and episode will walk you through some considerations regarding livestock that may be kept near your production area. In addition, a boilerplate policy for livestock in the proximity of the production area will be given with ways you can adapt them for your use.

It's important to remember that all animals pose a food safety risk to crops. Any time growers aggregate animals, the risk to contaminating adjacent cropland goes up. Therefore, for the purposes of this guidance document, livestock refers to all domesticated animals, regardless of size or number. This means that domesticated animals kept as 4-H animals or temporarily, such as summer broilers, all fall within the scope of this document. The auditor makes no distinction between these forms of livestock and others.

Depending on the audit scheme, the distance between livestock and your production area may be more or less than 100 yards. Always check the standard setback distances in the audit you are looking to have for actual setbacks. If the livestock are too close, the best solution is to move either the production area or the livestock to comply with the setbacks.

In some cases, producers will not be able to move either the livestock or the production area. In these cases, a mitigation strategy must be put in place. The mitigation strategy should impede the movement of manure and particulate into the production area under most weather conditions.

Possible mitigation strategies could include berms or ditches high enough or deep enough to prevent manure laden water flow into the production area. If these earthen barriers were planted with fast growing trees, such as poplars, a particulate barrier can be established in short order.

Most auditing schemes also require that the perimeter fence around the livestock area be maintained and periodically inspected. As with all inspections, you will need to keep a record of the inspections and any repairs that need to be made. A sample record sheet is included in the show notes.

Below you'll find a boilerplate for a livestock policy. It will need to be adjusted for your circumstances based on what you do to mitigate manure infiltration and the requirements of your auditing scheme.

Livestock Policy

It is the policy of (Insert farm name here) to keep livestock at least 100 yards from production areas. Fences will be maintained between livestock and production areas and periodically monitored to ensure livestock exclusion.

In areas where livestock manure may enter the production area as runoff, mitigation strategies will be put in place. These mitigation strategies may include a berm along the border between the field and the livestock, a ditch along the border between the field and the livestock or a physical barrier preventing the flow or drift of manure into the production area.

The standard operating procedure for product contaminated by manure, runoff, leachate or other contaminating factors is to dispose of the product immediately

The auditor is looking for evidence of a system written in the GAP Manual to minimize incidence of foodborne illness, visual evidence that it is taking place and documentation that it has been taking place in the past. Writing the Livestock Policy is the first step. Implementing changes or developing mitigation strategies on your farm is the next step. Documenting that you are monitoring fences and discarding contaminated produce is the final step.