BioSecure
Enhanced and cost-effective biosecurity in livestock production

Utrecht University

PRACTICE ABSTRACT # 47

Considerations for safe and welfare friendly outdoor access for livestock

Outdoor access is generally perceived beneficial for animal welfare but might have increased biosecurity risks. This practice abstract aims to provide guidance for outdoor access while respecting risks for biosecurity and animal welfare.

Principal assumptions; providing outdoor access usually provides more absolute space for livestock and enables more rooting, grazing and or exploratory behaviour and as such meet the intrinsic behavioural needs of all livestock species.



Still, providing outdoor access also increases risks for:

- Contracting diseases from wildlife, amongst others wild boar, deer, birds.
- Sustaining injuries from elements in and around pastures, such as agricultural equipment and polluted soils
- Hoof and foot rot when insufficient dry areas are available
- Thirst, with large distances to drinking water access or drinking water is less available in times of drought
- Sunburns and thermal stress, due to direct sunlight and pigmented skin may absorb more energy
- Infection with parasites, such as nematodes and flukes
- Insect bites and stings
- Exposure to poisonous plants and improper stored animal feed



When providing outdoor access consider the following questions:

- ❑ Is the outdoor area sufficiently fenced off?
- ❑ Is it possible to place netting above the outdoor area in case of increased disease risk from wild birds?
- ❑ Is the outdoor area free from (agricultural) equipment?
- ❑ Is the soil of the outdoor area sufficiently dry and free from pollution (e.g. glass, metals)?
- ❑ Is there sufficient clean and potable drinking water and sufficient access points?
- ❑ Is animal feed adequately stored and provided according to good feeding practices?
- ❑ Is sufficient share space provided ensuring all animals can rest outside protected from direct sunlight?
- ❑ Is rotational grazing planning in place?
- ❑ Are parasite and insect prevention programmes in place?
- ❑ Are poisonous plants removed or fenced off?

If one or multiple boxes cannot be checked:

-> consult your farm advisor
-> please make sure to take appropriate actions



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