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Top biosecurity tips for contractors working in the grains industry

As grain contractors gear up for winter crop planting, there's a timely request to be "biosecurity wise" when moving from farm to farm and region to region.

Louise Rossiter, Grains Biosecurity Officer with Industry and Investment NSW and Plant Health Australia, says farmers, contractors and staff have a role in preventing the spread of unwanted pests and diseases.

"The movement of machinery, vehicles and staff is a major risk factor in the transmission of pests between paddocks, farms and farming regions," Ms Rossiter says.



A thorough wash down of all farm machinery is recommended for farm biosecurity

"Ideally, before arriving, the contractor should ask the farmer if there are any specific protocols or precautions in place, such as designated parking or quarantine areas.

"Getting a copy of the farm map is a good idea, as is understanding the farmer's requirements."

Ms Rossiter says contractors need to ensure clothes, vehicles and equipment are all clean of soil and plant material as tyres, radiator grilles, wheel arches, floor mats and work boots can carry weed seeds and pests.

"Carry a basic biosecurity tool kit, which should contain cleaning items for clothing, vehicles and equipment, in addition to personal safety gear."

A vehicle's biosecurity kit should include:

- Stiff brushes and scrapers for removing dirt and seeds from boots and tyres
- Equipment for cleaning vehicle cabins

For more information on Farm Biosecurity visit www.farmbiosecurity.com.au

- A small hand sprayer with a solution of methylated spirits (at the rate of 70% spirit:30% water). Use this on hands/clothes/boots after moving through crops
- Soap and water
- Approved disinfectant for cleaning down vehicles/equipment
- Sealable plastic bags for collecting items for disposal
- Personal safety gear such as rubber boots, rubber gloves, disposable overalls and boot covers

While this basic kit and good hygiene for you, your equipment and vehicles is a good start, it may not stop everything. Louise says growers should also maintain a simple visitor record and contractors should complete their log books to help track the movement of people or activities who may have inadvertently spread a pest or disease in the event of an outbreak.

She says once on the farm, contractors should use designated laneways or tracks where possible.

“Equipment travelling through green crops can spread foliar diseases, such as rusts, so keeping to laneways, minimising contact with non-target crops, and of course, reporting anything unusual, are important biosecurity measures.”

Louise Rossiter says cleaning is a vital biosecurity action and before leaving a farm, contractors are advised to use vehicle wash-down stations, high pressure hoses and appropriate detergents to clean all soil and plant material from vehicles, equipment and clothing.

To clean vehicles and equipment effectively, use a detergent and degreaser and pay particular attention to tyres, radiator grilles, wheel arches, sump guards, floor mats and under carriages where seeds and dirt can lodge, she says. This is particularly important coming into seeding, where mud can easily stick to vehicles and be transferred between properties.

“If you use high pressure air to clean vehicles and equipment, make sure soil and plant material aren’t blown or washed into crops or waterways.”

“There’s no room for apathy or laziness when it comes to the integrity of farm biosecurity.”

The Farm Biosecurity program is a joint initiative of PHA and Animal Health Australia (AHA).

If you see anything unusual on your property call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881 or the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888.

For more information on biosecurity, visit www.farmbiosecurity.com.au.

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