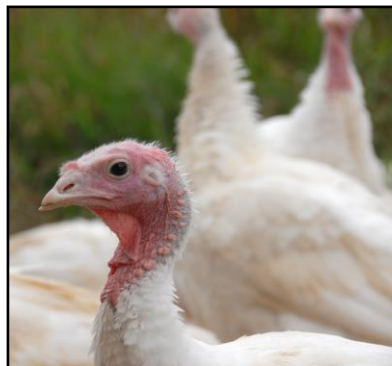


Farm Animal Health Plans

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This Fact Sheet and accompanying template plans were developed by the SPCA Certified program in consultation with veterinarians. This Fact Sheet provides an overview of the principles that should be addressed in any farm animal health plan. Completion of these documents does not replace the importance for each farmer to establish a working relationship with a veterinarian who can be available to them as required.

Why Write a Health Plan?



Animal health is an important part of animal well-being. One important step in maintaining animal health is the development of a flock or herd health plan for your farm.

A health plan is an active management tool based on farm specific experiences and problems. The main goal of a health plan is to promote and optimize the health and well-being of individual animals and groups of animals by minimizing mortality, illness and injury over time. This involves planning to encourage disease resistance through **prevention**, **detection** and **management**.

Key features of a good health plan include protocols (current policies), records, reviews (establishing target and intervention levels) and actions (plans based on the review). The plan should be farm-specific, easy to use, dynamic and regularly reviewed. New actions will result in improved protocols and subsequent record review leading, again, to action modification. The farmer, with competent external advice, must drive the process. All farm staff who have responsibility for the animals should be familiar with the animal health plan(s) in place on the farm.

Thinking About Your Farm

An important aspect of your animal health plan involves the unique characteristics of your farm. Mainly:

- **Location:** where the farm is located in relation to other farms, roadways and neighbours as well as the frequency of animal movements and visitors to your farm;
- **Types of animals:** whether you have multiple species or various ages among the animals on your farm;
- **Disease:** the types of diseases that are found in your area and/or diseases that are common to the species you raise.

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Health Promotion

Factors that contribute to good health promotion include:

- Genetic make-up of your animals;
- Nutrition;
- Housing conditions including sanitation, ventilation and comfort;
- Established working relationship with a veterinarian;
- Management practices including handling, surgical procedures, vaccinations and care of newborn animals;
- Striving to achieve the 5 Freedoms, with particular attention to expressing normal behaviours for animal well-being



Prevention

Prevention involves outlining the tools or methods in place on your farm for preventing disease. Factors used in developing this area of an animal health plan include:

- 1) **Veterinary relationship:** Do you have an established relationship with a veterinarian?
- 2) **Disease risk factors:** Based on the farm's situation, how are disease risk factors determined and then managed?
- 3) **Vaccination:** Are animals vaccinated against high-risk diseases?
- 4) **Quarantine:** Are new animals segregated from the resident animals? How are they segregated?
- 5) **Cross-contamination:** How does staff move between pens or barns? What protocols are in place for movement between younger and older animals and between healthy and sick animals?
- 6) **Parasites:** Are your animals at risk for certain parasites? Do you have prevention and treatment protocols in place?
- 7) **Euthanasia:** Are sick animals with untreatable conditions euthanized to end suffering?
- 8) **Record keeping:** What types of records are kept to help identify early signs of disease?



Disease Detection

Within your individual animal health plan you should outline which clinical triggers you regularly monitor to detect disease and identify thresholds for these signs that would cause you to respond and investigate further. You know your animals best. Through daily observation you will be the best judge of a change in their behaviour. When in doubt, ask your veterinarian. Examples include:

- Unexplained change in feed/water consumption;
- Unexplained increase in mortality;
- Onset of clinical signs of disease (e.g. decreased activity, cough, diarrhea, discharge from eyes)

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Disease Response Plan

Once a disease trigger is identified, your response plan will take effect. If a disease is identified, your animal health plan should include an outline of the treatment protocols you would follow.

The two key components of this response plan are:

- 1) **Establishing acceptable thresholds** for your farm (e.g. mortality rate in a specific time period, an unexplained change in consumption of water or food, loss of body weight).
- 2) **Establishing a clear action plan** for each threshold or trigger, including all steps and protocols you would follow (e.g. contact a veterinarian, self quarantine of farm, animal isolation)

***Note:** The tables in the health plan templates have been provided as examples of minimum response and treatment plans that must be followed. In addition to these, farmers may list any other appropriate farm specific protocols. Farmers are encouraged to consult with a veterinarian to review these tables and develop a more farm-specific plan.*

