



Animal Health Plan Guidelines:

What is an animal health plan?

In all well-managed livestock systems the prevention – as opposed to the cure – of pest and disease problems is as important as high levels of management and husbandry. One way of ensuring that a preventative approach sits at the very heart of your farm management is to develop an overall farm health plan.

A farm health plan is a working document which explains the management strategy for your livestock, written specifically for your farm.

A good farm health plan should:

- Identify all significant livestock pest and disease problems that you might face
- Outline how you intend to prevent their occurrence
- Explain what treatments you will use if pest or disease problems do occur
- Identify how you intend to improve overall herd or flock health – and **reduce reliance on veterinary treatments.**

Why have a health plan?

The health plan encourages you to assess the pest and disease risks on your own farm, to record and monitor their incidence, and then enables you to use this information to make management changes or carry out veterinary intervention, if required. It will also help you to see if these management changes are working over the time and the farm's overall performance.

Writing a plan:

The farm health plan must be written with the help of a veterinary surgeon.

i.) Introduction:

- Describes the farm and holding, including premises and land available and summary of grazing regime including the aims and objectives of grazing as well as the expected outputs (when applicable).

ii.) Outline of the Livestock System:

- The Land: - More detail including how the total area is split up and any management restrictions or subsidies that affect the land.
- The Livestock: - A description of the numbers, ages and types of stock and

whether they are owned or borrowed. Include a description of the expected products of the grazing enterprise (when applicable) and how the animals will be used for these ends.

iii.) Housing:

- Description of housing available, when and how it is used
- Include information on cleaning, disinfection and routine maintenance of buildings and equipment, and use and disposal of soiled and/or contaminated bedding.

iv.) Feed and water:

- Description of the forage available from the land and a detailed description of what mineral and/or forage supplements will be given and under what circumstances, especially under emergency conditions, e.g. drought, heavy snow and flood.
- Include observations of the grazing/browsing behaviour of the animals that might indicate nutritional deficiencies (when applicable).

v.) Record keeping

- Ensure appropriate records are kept:

- o Continuous flock/herd records;
- o Passports;
- o Movement book;
- o Medicine record.

vi.) Training

- Outline current experience of staff, past training and future requirements.

vii.) Fire and emergency procedures

- A plan of action for emergencies, e.g. fire in housing system.

viii.) Livestock Health Plan:

- General approach: A description of the general regime followed to ensure the health of the stock e.g. selective breeding
- Detailed information about breeding regime, what animals are used in which parts of the site & why?
- Areas where changes are needed are identified

- Where necessary, disease level targets for the next 12 months are established
- Veterinary routines:

- o A summary of the thinking behind the veterinary routines, alternative control treatment
- o Strategies and management / husbandry practices, based on organism life cycles and disease epidemiology/factors
- o A list of routine treatments that are used and under what circumstances, especially preventative management (e.g. vaccinations, clean worm strategies)
- o Clinical treatments that would be used to deal with specific problems
- o A list of any diseases that have presented problems in the past on the holding, and could cause a problem in the future, what treatments were used and their effectiveness
- o Include future intended treatments or action to avoid the disease.

Biosecurity

- Biosecurity is the prevention of disease-causing agents entering or leaving any place where farm animals are present
- The following points provide a guide:

- o Draw up a written policy and herd/flock health plan, and make sure you, your staff and visitors stick to it
- o Manage farm visitors, (vehicles and people), & have disinfectant, brushes & water available
- o Keep farm access routes, handling and parking areas clean and tidy
- o Don't share injecting and dosing equipment
- o Implement a pest control programme
- o Dispose of fallen stock properly
- o Keep livestock away from freshly spread slurry for 6 weeks
- o Breed your own replacements
- o Regularly clean and disinfect:
 - All equipment used in contact with your animals, including transport and water troughs.
 - Buildings used to isolate animals
- o Use mains water for livestock wherever you can, and if possible, fence off stagnant ponds and watercourses that other stock have access to
- o Check your fencing regularly to prevent your stock mixing with neighbouring stock

o Check the health of new animals – seek veterinary advice:

- **Veterinary inspection and advice pre-sale – blood tests? Vaccinations?**
- Health status of animals, area and region being sourced from, e.g. TB.
- Source stock from certified disease free herds/flocks, e.g. Scrapie, enzootic abortion.
- Pre-movement treatments, e.g. broad-spectrum wormer, sheep scab treatment.
- Quarantine and isolate stock from other animals once on farm:
- Contact VRD Animal Health Office for detailed advice:
veterinaryregulation.mafa@gov.mt
- Keep separate from other stock for 21 days
- Quarantine buildings/paddocks separate from others by 3 metres
- Use different staff & equipment to handle stock, or handle isolated stock last
- Dispose of bedding and wash PPE/overalls carefully

The main pathologies present on the Maltese territory which may be reduced in occurrence by a good implementation of the animal health plan are:

Bovines:

- Calf diarrhoea
- Calf pneumonia
- Retained placenta and endometritis
- Mastitis
- Lameness (foot rot, digital dermatitis, white line, sole ulcers).

Caprins and ovins:

- Calf diarrhoea
- Calf pneumonia
- Retained placenta and endometritis
- Mastitis
- Lameness (foot rot, digidermatitis, white line, sole ulcers)

Swine:

- Streptococcus suis infection

- Post-partum vaginal /vulvar infections in sows
- Mastitis (E Coli / Salmonella)
- Greasy pig disease (Staphylococcus hyicus)
- Ringworm (Trichophyton /Microsporum spp.)
- Mange (Sarcoptes scabiei)
- Fly strike (House fly / stable fly)
- Internal Parasites
- Coccidiosis (Various coccidia)

Poultry:

- respiratory diseases
- gastrointestinal disease
- foot-pad dermatitis
- injurious pecking
- fungal infection

Rabbits:

- skin lesions
- ear infections
- mastitis
- wound infections

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