

# *Footbaths Are a Simple Form of Biosecurity*

A footbath is a very simple form of biosecurity that helps prevent the potential spread of disease. Organisms have the potential to survive for several days or weeks in the dirt stuck to the bottom of your shoes. Footbaths can eliminate these organisms.

Depending on the amount of traffic on your farm, it may be necessary to have more than one footbath. Be sure that materials are provided at every footbath. Do not share scrub brushes between separate footbaths. There are several recommended disinfectants to use in footbaths.



Most disinfectants can be ordered from your local feed store or online. Remember, some disinfectants may be inactivated by sunlight so be sure to follow directions on the label carefully on how to mix and maintain an active disinfectant (USDA, 2002; McCrea et al., 2008).

## **Materials for a Footbath (McCrea et al., 2008)**

- Long handle scrub brush
- "Fake grass" or a synthetic bristled doormat
- Hose for mixing new batches of disinfectants
- Tray with short sides (ex. litter pan). Depending on the location and/or type of disinfectant used, you may want to have a lid for the tray to prevent contamination or inactivation of the disinfectant.

## **Setting Up a Footbath**

It may be a good idea to set the footbath up on a solid surface, such as concrete, bricks, or cement blocks to prevent mud around the footbath area. A solid surface can be swept or washed down to eliminate the buildup of dirt that can pollute your footbath. Mud quickly pollutes your footbath, making it useless in providing protection. Location is the most important key in setting up your footbath. Select a location where everyone who comes onto your farm must pass through.

- Place container in selected location.
- Cut mat to fit inside the container.
- Mix disinfectant according to label and add to container.
- Hang long handled brush within reach.
- Post footbath directions at eye level explaining how to use footbath.



## **Maintaining a Footbath**

Make sure to maintain a "clean" footbath. Footbaths should be changed and cleaned periodically. How often you clean your footbath depends on how much foot traffic you have on your farm. On average, footbaths require weekly cleaning. The empty container and mat should be scrubbed with a brush and rinsed thoroughly. Next, add fresh disinfectant and place the mat back into the container. Do not empty the footbath in an area where the footbath is used so that a dry area around the footbath can be maintained (USDA, 2002; McCrea et al., 2008). Don't forget to post directions near footbaths instructing users how to correctly wash footwear.

### References:

McCrea, B.A., and Bradley, F.A. 2008 Footbaths for Animal Facilities: Easier than you think. University of California-Division of Agriculture and National Resources. Publication 8281.

USDA. 2002. Biosecurity Footbaths for Exotic Newcastle Disease Information for Bird Owners. California Department of Food and Agriculture. [www.cdffa.ca.gov/ahfss/Animal\\_Health/pdfs/Footbaths\\_owner\\_Dec02.pdf](http://www.cdffa.ca.gov/ahfss/Animal_Health/pdfs/Footbaths_owner_Dec02.pdf). Accessed May 2008.

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## Recommended Disinfectants

Class of Disinfectant	Advantages	Disadvantages
Phenols (Lysol, Tek-trol, Environ)	Effective against fungi & many bacteria Retain efficacy in presence of organic material	Pine-tar odor Turn “milky” in water
Iodophors (Betadine, Isodyne, Eladol)	Effective against bacteria & many viruses	Can stain clothing & surfaces Does not work well in presence of organic material
Hypochlorites (Bleach, Halazone)	Relatively inexpensive Effective against bacteria & many viruses	More active in warm water Irritating to skin Corrosive to metal
Quaternary Ammonium (Germex, Virex, Vindicator)	Odorless, non-irritating, deodorizing, colorless Have detergent action	Inactivated in the presence of some soaps or soap residues
Oxidizing Agents (Hydrogen Peroxide)	Effective against bacteria & spores, viruses, & fungi Active at low concentrations	Must keep in tight, cool container Avoid direct sunlight
Compound Cresol	Effective against bacteria & most viruses Non-corrosive Soapy – mechanically lifts dirt away	Apply hot to be most effective Has odor that can be absorbed by food products (ex. eggs)
Formals	Effective against bacteria, viruses, fungus & spores	Carcinogenic

Gernat, A. 2004. Poultry Farm Biosecurity Field Manual. NC State University. Publication AG-651.  
 Jeffrey, J.S. 1997. Biosecurity for Poultry Flocks. University of California, Davis, School of Veterinary Medicine

