K-State livestock expert urges youth to follow biosecurity practices before and after fair

DeRouche says watch for signs of sickness, consult with vet

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MANHATTAN, Kan. – A Kansas State University livestock specialist is urging youth and others showing animals at local fairs to take the time to make sure that those animals remain safe – both at the fair and during transportation.

Joel DeRouche said youth and others associated with showing animals should have basic biosecurity practices in place to prevent the spread of diseases between animals, and to contain the sickness when it occurs.

According to DeRouche, swine can spread disease quickly amongst themselves. He advises those showing swine to look for symptoms before, during and after fair season.

“If your pig begins to cough, has a loose stool or isn't eating, it is important to consult a veterinarian on a treatment plan to help cure and prevent the spread of the sickness,” he said.

DeRouche said maintaining biosecurity at the fair can be hard with multiple showmen bringing hogs together. He said a common practice using something solid -- such as a wood or plastic board inside of the pens -- to prevent the hogs from making nose to nose contact, which is one way in which disease is spread.

According to Derouche, “if you're bringing your livestock back home from the fair, you need to have in place a plan that you have set up with your vet.”
“Isolation is the primary way to prevent bringing sicknesses home to your (non-fair) animals,” he said. “If you do not have a separate area to isolate your (fair animals), then separate the hogs that were at the fair in a separate part of the barn from the others.”

Another way to prevent spreading sickness includes cleaning and disinfecting equipment that was taken to the fair, or used frequently at the farm. DeRouchey said sickness can also be carried on clothes and shoes, so making sure to thoroughly clean and change clothing can prevent sickness.

“If you do have a sick animal, it is important not to spread it to the other pigs,” said DeRouchey, who encourages youth to become certified by a program known as YQCA, or Youth for the Quality Care of Animals.

More information on livestock care is also available from K-State’s Department of Animals Sciences and Industry.