

Biosecurity Campaign Directed Toward Non-Farm Neighbors and Visitors
Lancaster County Conservation District—Ombudsman Program
Final Report

The Pennsylvania Agricultural Ombudsman Program for eastern PA engaged in this grant with the CPLE to enhance awareness and compliance with biosecurity with non-farm neighbors and visitors to farms. As a reminder, the proposal was based on the fact that most farmers are well aware of biosecurity concerns and why taking disease prevention measures are critical. Farmers want to protect their herds, flocks, families, employees, and neighboring farms. Education campaigns have provided farmers with access to publications for biosecurity protocols, signage and instructions of what to do.

Many non-farmers see a farm as a great place to visit, pet the animals, wander the “open space” and bring children or grandchildren for entertainment. They generally have no idea what biosecurity means, why it is critical to be respected, nor their potential impact for transmitting diseases. Sometimes farmers grant friends and neighbors access to their farm, to keep good neighbor relations. Some allow hunting or fishing. Whether people enter farms with permission or without, when people don’t understand or don’t respect biosecurity measures, diseases can spread quickly. Educational campaigns to alert non-farmers about biosecurity and the importance of it, don’t seem to exist based on a Google search in 2020 by the PA Agricultural Ombudsman in Eastern PA.

Therefore, the Ag Ombudsman Program created a large metal sign that could be hung outside on barns or around operations that explain biosecurity and its importance. A similar brochure was created. This grant was used to print and distribute many more of those metal signs.

A total of 360 metal signs were printed and have been or will soon be distributed with this grant. 223 of the signs were delivered to PennAg Industries to distribute them to 6 different people or agribusinesses associated with PennAg Industries. The majority of these 223 signs went to poultry integrators who distributed them to their individual growers. A few months later, 135 signs were requested by 10 different County Conservation Districts across the state (Pike, Perry, Cumberland, Berks, Bucks, Westmoreland, Somerset, Bedford, Union and Columbia). Those will be delivered to the respective Conservation Districts within May and June 2022, working with PA DEP’s Conservation District Field Reps at statewide or regional events, NRCS staff attending regional meetings, and Conservation Districts directly picking them up from the PA Ag Ombudsman. The Conservation Districts will be responsible for distributing them to the appropriate farms within their counties.

The PA Ag Ombudsman has requested that the Conservation Districts who requested the 135 signs provide feedback to me later about how their farmers used the signs, how effective they feel they are, and if it generates questions or comments or changed behavior among visitors, family or hunters/fishers. I don't expect to have results prior to the end of this grant, but I will store that information for future requests for funding, if necessary.