BEFORE THEY COME IN:

PRE-HOUSING CHECKLIST

BioSecurity
Animal Health Ireland.ie

Housing brings cattle into closer contact, increasing the risk of disease spreading. But the steps you take before cattle come indoors can make a real difference to animal health throughout the housing period.

PREP YOUR SHEDS

Action	Why it Matters	✓
Clean and disinfect sheds	Dirty shed environments act as reservoirs of infection. Remove dung and other organic material before disinfecting to reduce disease challenge. Cryptosporidium may require specialist disinfectants and procedures.	☐
Prepare calf and calving areas	Calves are born with limited immunity so infections in dirty pens can increase calf mortality rates. Thoroughly clean calf pens, calving pens, hospital areas and equipment to reduce infection risks, particularly for young calves.	☐
Check ventilation and stocking levels	Poor airflow in sheds allows bugs to concentrate and spread easily between animals. Good airflow and adequate space help reduce moisture, airborne contaminants and stress that can contribute to disease.	☐
Check drainage and bedding	Poor drainage/wet bedding leads to increased risk of infections, e.g. navel-ill. Fix drainage problems and have clean, dry bedding ready. Wet conditions increase the risk of disease.	☐
Check lighting	Poor lighting limits your ability to pick up aborted or sick cows in highly stocked sheds. Replace faulty lights before housing. Good lighting helps you identify sick animals early and work safely.	☐
Inspect and repair housing facilities	Damaged facilities risk accidents to cattle and to herdowners. Check slats, cubicles and feeding gates. Repairs now can prevent injuries to cattle and improve handler safety.	☐
Check water supply and drinkers	Dirty drinkers/troughs transmit diseases between cattle. Clean drinkers, check water flow and protect pipes from frost to ensure cattle have reliable access to clean water.	☐
Check for rodents	Rodents spread infections to cattle and to herdowners, e.g. Lepto. Inspect sheds and feed stores for signs of rodents. Appropriate control measures help prevent feed contamination and disease spread.	☐

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PREP YOUR ANIMALS

Action	Why it Matters	✓
Review vaccination plans	Failure to vaccinate in time reduces the protection afforded by vaccines. Discuss herd-specific vaccination requirements with your vet and allow enough time to complete recommended courses before the risk period. Always fully complete vaccination courses (i.e. if two shots are required, ensure the second shot is given at the correct time for maximum efficiency.	☐
Assess parasite risks	Parasite burdens silently reduce growth and impair cattle immunity. Review parasite history and treatment needs with your vet. Appropriate treatment at the right time helps protect animal health and performance.	☐
Plan animal grouping	Mixing/grouping cattle is a major stressor and disease transmission risk. Avoid unnecessary mixing of different ages and sources. Older animals may carry infections that pose greater risks to younger cattle.	☐
Prepare isolation facilities	Sick/aborting cattle are a high disease risk if housed in calving pens instead of in an isolation unit. Have suitable hospital and isolation pens ready to separate sick, bought-in or returning animals and reduce disease transmission.	☐
Plan for purchased cattle	Buying in is the biggest risk to herd biosecurity. Consider testing, vaccination, parasite treatment, hoof-health checks and isolation before introducing new animals to the herd.	☐
Check body condition and herd health	Heifer/cows in thin or fat condition at calving will have more calving and metabolic problems. Assess body condition and general health before housing. Discuss feeding requirements and herd-specific risks with your vet to address potential problems early.	☐

GOOD BIOSECURITY STARTS BEFORE HOUSING

CHECK. PREPARE. PROTECT.

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