



## RISK OF DISCLOSURE OF PRRS POSITIVE SITE

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this document is to help producers prepare for the possibility of a PRRS outbreak—to anticipate the variable and uncontrolled responses by individuals, businesses and the community. No one can control or predict behavior in a voluntary effort to eliminate a disease, but it is important for each producer to contemplate the risk of disclosing a positive site.

A PRRS outbreak causes both emotional and financial hardship to a producer, particularly when it happens within a regional control area where prevalence is low. Relationships with family, friends and business partners can become strained, suspicions can arise as a source of the outbreak is sought, and the inclination to withdraw from the pork production community is enticing.

Some neighboring producers and affiliated businesses may react to an outbreak in such a way that could harm an affected producer's business. Consider the following possibilities:

1. Some businesses that supply goods and services to a production unit may be reluctant to continue to do so in the same way as in the past.
2. Some businesses may feel pressure from other producers to stop doing business with a positive production unit in order to protect their interests.
3. Feed delivery personnel, transport services, or even friends and neighbors may become reluctant to visit the positive farm.
4. Accusations and the threat of litigation may arise if another outbreak occurs in the area.

In an investigation of 35 outbreaks (Torremorell et al., 2004) the following were thought to be the source of infection: infected pigs or contaminated semen (17%), contaminated transportation (14%), biosecurity breaches (6%), insects (3%), unknown (17%) and what was described as area spread (42%). Area spread generally refers to a PRRS infected herd being in the vicinity of the herd that became infected and no other route of infection could be identified. There are several important take-home messages from this study:

1. Introducing infected pigs or contaminated semen is the easiest way to infect a herd and testing the source and quarantining deliveries are effective ways to prevent infection,
2. The fact that the exact route and/or source for herds becoming infected was unidentified in 59% of herds emphasizes the extreme difficulty in identifying the source when pigs or semen were not involved.
3. Although having a positive PRRS site in a region is a concern, experience from the N212 MN program suggests that having an infected neighbor does not mean that virus will spread outside the farm.

While eliminating PRRS from the region is our goal, it is important to remember that this is a voluntary program and producers have no obligation to participate. Owners of newly infected herds need to contemplate the risks of disclosing their status. Neighbors must

balance intensifying biosecurity efforts and communicating concerns about a higher risk of infection with an understanding of the difficulties that their actions may pose for the newly infected herd. All production systems are at risk of becoming PRRS positive at some point. We strive to work together to eliminate PRRS while not eliminating producers.

Reference:

Torremorell M, Geiger J, Thompson B, Christianson B (2004). Evaluation of potential sources of PRRS virus infections in negative herds. Proc AD Leman Conf, St. Paul, MN.