



NAA RESOURCE

Preparing for Animal Rights Activism

To help protect farms and food processing facilities, the federal Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA) was passed in 2006. The AETA created a federal law prohibiting individuals from participating in activities “for the purpose of damaging or interfering with the operations of an animal enterprise.” The law covers conduct that “damages or causes the loss of any real or personal property” or “places a person in reasonable fear” of injury or harm.

While the AETA helped establish some protection for farms, animal rights activists continue to attempt to gain access to farms with intentions of either harming the facility (with vandalism, by releasing animals or through other tactics), or by damaging the farm’s reputation or the reputation of buyers. Increasingly, animal rights extremists target farms and processing plants with “undercover” videos – often edited to depict a certain environment and distributed to the media or on YouTube. These videos are the extreme exceptions to the high standards of animal care found in farms and processing plants. The alarming images cause a lot of concern among consumers that are unfamiliar with fish or shellfish aquaculture.

The following basic actions will help maintain security at your farm. These recommendations are not a guarantee of safety, nor are they comprehensive to all farm operations, but they provide a good start to developing an overall security plan to help ensure the safety of your family, your employees and your animals. When in doubt, consult an attorney familiar with your unique situation and local laws.

Animal Welfare Practices:

- Develop a company statement on animal welfare and and policies relative to animal care, treatment, nutrition, etc. [Click here to access NAA's Fish Care Policy template.](#) [Click here to access NAA's Shellfish Care Policy template.](#)
- Talk with the public and the media about your operation's best practices. [View NAA's Media and Public Interaction resource for more information.](#)
- Train all employees that will interact with animals on proper animal care or handling procedures, including what to do if animals are sick or just uncooperative.
- Make it known you practice zero tolerance regarding animal mistreatment and that you will prosecute to the full extent of the law, if necessary.
- Have all employees review and sign that they understand your companies policies. [Click here for NAA's Employee Acknowledgement template.](#)

Working with Law Enforcement

- Talk seriously with your local police/fire/emergency departments now. Get to know the people whose job it is to protect you, your loved ones and your property. Let them know you're prioritizing your facility's security and be sure to report any eco or animal rights criminal activity.
- It is imperative you know whom to call if necessary.
 - Know response times.
 - Know how many officers are on duty during early morning hours, prime time for 'hits' on rural facilities.
- Provide law enforcement with a map of your facilities.
 - Be sure to indicate service shut-off locations, security areas, and any area of sensitivity or vulnerability.
- Report all suspicious and/or illegal incidents to local police.
- [View NAA's Creating a Relationship with Local Enforcement resource](#) for more information.

Maintain Facility Security

- Lock office doors and file cabinets.
- Have firewalls installed on your computer systems.
- Maintain separate business and personal computers.
- Keep all animal health products under lock and key.
- To help ensure security, have proper lighting, motion detectors, security cameras, and locks or key code access on gates and doors.

Maintain Facility Security (cont.)

- Maintain fencing and gates. Post signs indicating restricted areas and no trespassing, etc.
- Ensure access to the facility is controlled. Establish check-in procedures for visitors. Place appropriate signs noting such procedures and require visitors to sign in and out upon entering and leaving facility. Use visitor identification badges – even the stick-on kind is better than no visitor identification. This protects your visitor as well as your operation.
- Escort visitors (especially reporters and photographers/videographers) at all times. Employees should be instructed to report all unescorted visitors to the appropriate management and security personnel immediately.
- [View NAA's Avoid Hiring a Potential Activist resource](#) for more information.

Employee Best Practices

- Thoroughly screen all job applicants. Take the time to check all references. If you have any questions, ask for further references. Double-check anyone who shows a university or college ID. Any hesitation to provide additional references or documentation by the prospective employee should be a red flag and likely take them off your hire list.
- Tell all employees at hiring that unannounced locker checks, etc. are part of your routine security maintenance operation and that you will report and/or prosecute any employee who breaks the law.
- Watch for unusual behavior by new employees or workers who have no reason to be in the facility past their regular shift.
- Ask seasoned employees to be your “eyes and ears” for anything unusual and have them report suspicious behavior to you.
- Inform employees in vulnerable areas that surveillance or infiltration is a possibility. Any suspicious activity should be reported to supervisors or the appropriate security person immediately.
- Ensure all employees are familiar with your policies regarding animal care, environmental stewardship, employee care and overall social responsibility. Remember, they have lives away from your business (school, church, soccer fields, etc.) and will likely be asked questions by individuals in your community.
- [View NAA's Managing Public Visitation resource](#) for more information.

Vigilant Communication Policies

- In all cases, designate a single spokesperson to handle all calls, including media, about animal care, animal rights or any company policy relative to animals. Also, conduct tests of your security system and if necessary, mock drills on your response program, including media statements, etc.

Vigilant Communication Policies (cont.)

- Evaluate every request for information about your farm, even the most routine. Don't fall prey to false praise – never agree to a suspicious request until you have verified the validity of the request.
- Whenever possible, require requests for sensitive information/tours be in writing.
 - Never provide information over the phone (it can be misinterpreted or misconstrued).
 - Always reply in writing. Obtain as much information as possible, e.g. name, phone number, address, reason for request, what will the person be doing with the information, who else may have been contacted, etc.
 - Ask for references. Make a call to verify the person requesting any sensitive information is who they say they are, especially those claiming to be reporters.
 - Ask if you may receive a copy of the final report once it is completed. If the person hesitates to cooperate with any of these requests, refuse them access to your operation or information about your operation.
- Watch for warning sign that you may be a target. General patterns include:
 - An increase in requests for animal specific information or on-farm tours.
 - Calls/letters questioning or criticizing your business or particular practices.
 - Harassing calls/letters – perhaps not to your farm but one near you; increase in media attention to issues relating to US aquaculture.
 - Special interest group campaigns locally.
 - Unusual interest in gaining employment, especially in roles involving animal handling.
- Develop a crisis communication/action plan.
 - Establish policies and procedures for handling disruptive, illegal situations as well as for handling adverse publicity that might result from the misuse of information.
 - Your priority is to keep you and your employees safe. Take care of people, then move on to ways to protect bricks and mortar.
- [View NAA's Media and Public Interactions resource](#) for more information.



Please keep in mind this information is provided for informational purposes only. Seek individualized, professional legal advice prior to implementing these practices to ensure compliance with legal standards and contact local law enforcement if you anticipate protests. Learn your rights and protections under local, state or federal law.

Document created in proud partnership with the [Animal Agriculture Alliance](#).



Do not hesitate to contact the NAA with questions or comments at (251) 504-6995 or naa@nationalaquaculture.org