



Essential Guide to Footbaths

Footbaths are frequently the first line defence as part of a biosecurity protocol. Failure to observe best practice can be costly!

The purpose of this guide is to help eliminate issues and poor practices commonly found on livestock units

Tip:

Use a separate water supply close at hand to clean the footwear of soil and organic material prior to disinfection, as these will reduce the efficacy and durability of the disinfectant being used.



Remember:

Footbaths are for disinfecting, **NOT DESIGNED AS A WASHING POINT!** Organic matter inactivates disinfectants - some more so than others. **Clean THEN disinfect.** Clean the footbath when refilling to remove soiling.



Safety First:

Disinfectants are potentially hazardous chemicals and users should **ALWAYS** follow the manufacturer's recommendations and use protective measures.



Location: Footbaths should be on a solid surface (concrete or similar, not soil), close to the point of entry to the site and building to be entered. Ideally the direction of passage of the user should flow from the less clean area and only pass through to the clean area **AFTER** dipping to disinfect the footwear. (The area around the station should be cleaned and disinfected at appropriate intervals to reduce the risk disease transmission).

Suitability: Makeshift containers of various shapes and sizes are commonly used, this is far from ideal. Footbaths should have the following ideal features:

- Have a known volume and be easy to use.
- Should have a lid to keep out rain, prevent evaporation/contamination.
- Be highly visible and obvious and easily identified for purpose.
- Large and safe enough for the purpose and easily emptied and cleaned.

Management: Kp records to help control and manage the contents efficacy. Use of foot baths must be mandatory for all farm staff & visitors.

Choice of Disinfectant: Seek professional advice, as not all disinfectants are suitable for all purposes. Many require different concentrations to kill all the pathogens. Organic matter and low temperature require particular consideration.

How often to change disinfectants?

General Replenishment Guide*

Type of disinfectant	Replenishments per week	
	Light soiling	Heavy soiling
Glutaraldehyde + Formaldehyde	1	2
Glutaraldehyde + Quat. ammonium salt	2	3
Chlorocresol (phenol)	1	2
Oxidising disinfectants	2 - 4	3 - 7
Iodophors	2	3
Quat. ammonium salts	2	3



General Guide to Commonly Used Disinfectants:

Chlorocresols: This type of modern phenol is often used as a terminal disinfectant in house cleaning.

These disinfectants have to be used at relatively high concentrations of 2-4% against viruses but are extremely effective against bacteria at **0.5%** even in the presence of high levels of organic matter (test method EN 14349).

(Some farms use a chlorocresol disinfectant in the foot dip of chick & pullet housing to prevent field strains of coccidial oocyst being walked in and interfering with coccidiosis vaccination programmes.)

Oxidising disinfectants: This group of disinfectants are **sensitive** to the presence of **organic matter** and generally have to be used at a concentration of 1–2% although there are some well-known products in this class which should be used between 3–5% to ensure complete disinfection. **When using oxidising disinfectants, the operator should make sure that the solution is changed frequently to avoid loss of efficacy.**

Oxidising disinfectants are excellent in cold weather, when temperatures are near zero, and make can be useful as an alternative to glutaraldehydes and chlorocresols during cold winters.

Iodophors: These are **not as sensitive to low temperatures.**

They have a similar tolerance to **organic matter** as the glutaraldehyde plus quaternary ammonium salt type disinfectants. Their chemical basis is iodine which tends to discolour and stain surfaces and materials with which it comes into contact with. In general, a 2% solution, changed frequently, should provide a useful concentration for a footbath, colour is not necessarily a good guide as to its efficacy.

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Foot Dips - General Replenishment Guide*

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Oxidising disinfectants	2 - 4	3 - 7
Iodophors	2	3

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