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Perceptions of Finnish livestock producers regarding the costs of biosecurity

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Studies show significant differences between farms regarding the biosecurity measures applied on farms. If proper biosecurity measures are not implemented, costs due to a contagious animal disease can soar. It is therefore of critical importance to know how the implementation of biosecurity measures can be promoted. One important reason for not to implement a biosecurity measure can be that it is considered too costly. This study contributes to the literature by analysing how the characteristics of a livestock farm and producer affect perceptions about the costs of implementing biosecurity measures. A questionnaire enquiring about biosecurity measures was mailed to 4,000 Finnish livestock farms (3,000 cattle and 1000 pig farms) in early 2011. The overall response rate was 44%. Perceptions about the costs of implementation of seven different biosecurity measures were enquired, relating to the use of protective clothing, purchases of animals, and characteristics of livestock house. The results were classified into groups and logistic regression was used to estimate how farm and producer-specific characteristics were associated with producer perceptions about the costs of implementing a biosecurity measure. Previous experience about using the biosecurity measure tended reduce perceived costs significantly, and it was the most important single factor associated with the cost perception. Small farms tended to estimate somewhat lower cost of implementation than large farms. In some cases female and higher educated respondents and producers with a production contract also tended to perceive lower costs of implementation. Hence, results suggest that the uptake of biosecurity measures could be promoted by sharing information and increasing the awareness about (positive) experiences regarding biosecurity.