

TROUBLE SHOOTING COVID-19 ON-FARM

This document is intended to act as a guide on how to respond if there is a potential or identified case of COVID-19 on the farm. This document is not meant to be all inclusive but a reference to start the response process of what to do on-farm in such circumstances.

Preparation:

Understanding that there can be a COVID-19 outbreak in your farming operation is key to developing a plan on how to maintain business continuity and protect the health and safety of the workers on farm.

Include the following in your prevention plan:

- Communicate COVID-19 procedures and the expectation for them to be strictly followed.
- Let workers know that it is OK to stay home if they are sick.
- Identify key tasks that need to get done on the farm.
- Identify who can perform those key tasks on the farm.
- Cross-train workers to ensure that all key tasks can be completed with a limited number of available workers.
- Use reputable resources such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) to keep up to date on the pandemic situation.
- Have a business continuity plan in place to ensure the farm can continue to operate based on the worst-case scenario.
- Develop quarantine procedures especially for those who live on farm. Include the communication process for when a worker is sick, isolating, cleaning & disinfecting, monitoring symptoms, and transportation to medical facility if required.
- Investigate work refusals. Workers have the right to refuse unsafe work and it is the farmers duty to investigate the work refusal. A worker who exercises their right to refuse cannot be disciplined, intimidated or terminated from their position.

Operations:

Agriculture is deemed an essential service and farms can continue farm operations as usual, while trying to maintain the imposed restrictions as much as possible such as social distancing, cleaning & disinfecting common or shared spaces, tools, electronics, vehicles, and equipment before and after use, covering coughs and sneezes as well as washing your hands and not touching your face.

There are exemptions in agriculture for the imposed restrictions such as for social distancing and in the interest of health and safety of all workers to prevent the spread, follow the measures whenever possible.

Check with Federal and Provincial information on how to access supplies and services that are required for your farm operations. Follow the health and safety protocols when accessing the supplies and services.

COVID-19 On-Farm:

A worker has been diagnosed with COVID-19 on-farm it is important to consider the next steps to prevent the spread.

Follow the **If You are Sick** resource to identify the correct measures for worker isolation on or off farm, gaining medical help if needed, and cleaning and disinfecting protocols. Call 8-1-1 to report the case to the health authority

Considerations:

1. Was the virus contracted on farm?
 - a. If yes, complete the WCB report to file a claim.
 - b. Identify the source of contamination.
2. Was the virus contracted from the community?
 - a. What parts of the community did the worker visit?
3. Was the worker recently traveling out of Province?
 - a. If yes, where and for what purpose?
4. Are other workers at risk in contracting the virus?
 - a. Do you have vulnerable workers such as those who may be over 70 or have a compromised immune system?
 - b. Is there a self-monitoring system in place?
5. Consider the impact of stopping Farm Operations?
 - a. Determine the exposure to other workers, the elderly, and those with compromised immune systems.
 - b. Livestock on Farm that need food and water?
6. If operations can be sustained, what personal protective equipment may be required?
7. Is there adequate ventilation? Open windows and doors? Can some work tasks be moved outdoors?
8. Can surfaces be cleaned and disinfected to prevent the spread?
 - a. See cleaning and disinfecting and disinfectants resources available.
 - b. Should the cleaning and disinfecting protocols be done more frequently?
9. Does the business continuity plan need to be activated?
 - a. Are there enough available workers to complete essential on farm tasks once disinfecting protocols have been followed?

For further guidance and coaching, call or e-mail the Farm Safety Advisor at 902-957-2785 or lbrookhouse@nsfa-fane.ca

References:

1. <https://www.fcc-fac.ca/en/knowledge/update-your-hr-plan-for-covid-19.html>
2. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/beingprepared.html>