

NAVIGATING COVID-19 ON THE FARM

Best Practices for Daily Management of Sanitation,
Deliveries, Equipment Repairs, and Your People



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Best practices for limiting exposure and risk related to coronavirus

Some ideas on how to navigate a normal workday on the farm

AREAS OF CONCERN

- Contingency Planning
- Keeping Family and Employees Safe
- Equipment Use and Sanitation Plans
- Deliveries and On-Site Custom Services

CONTINGENCY PLANS or CONTINUITY OF
BUSINESS PLANS **keep operations running smoothly in
case of any disruption.**

More than 69% of farmers polled don't have a prepared backup plan should they become sick with the virus themselves.

- according to a current online poll conducted by DTN and data analytics company Farm Market iD.

Lack of continuity planning can result in a cascade of failures

- Insufficient operational resources
- Loss of workforce
- Workers who might not be adequately trained for tasks
- Lack of someone with operational knowledge
- Product waste

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

- Small farms may be at greater risk if a disruption occurs because the owner may be the sole operator, or alternatively a sole caretaker
- Prepare written documentation of your business operations in case of illness
- Communicate the plan to family or another person who can step in

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHILE PLANNING

- Identify critical functions of your business
 - Agronomy
 - Livestock operations
 - Marketing
 - Finance
 - Human Resources
- Walk through different scenarios

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHILE PLANNING

Employees or neighbors identified to help

- Do they have the necessary training to do the job?
- Is there access to the appropriate information?
 - passwords to important accounts
 - keys for equipment or gates

Questions about contingency plans?

Share discussions you have had at your own farms centered around how to plan in this time of a world health crisis.

KEEPING FAMILY AND EMPLOYEES SAFE

- Promote frequent, thorough hand washing and provide a place to do so.
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol for remote locations.
- Use disposable towels.
- Encourage respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes.
- Discourage workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible.
- Discourage sharing of any food or beverages.
- Encourage workers to stay home if they are sick.
- Maintain regular housekeeping practices, including routine cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces, equipment, and other elements of the work environment.

KEEPING FAMILY AND EMPLOYEES SAFE

- Post easy to follow guidelines
 - many printable resources are available at the CDC
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/factsheets.html>
- Talk with your employees about coronavirus
- Keep the communication lines open and be willing to make changes to procedures

EXAMPLES OF PRINTABLE MATERIALS

Stop the Spread of Germs

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- When in public, wear a cloth face covering over your nose and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

 [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

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Feeling Sick?

STOP

Stay home when you are sick!

If you feel unwell or have the following symptoms
please leave the building and contact your health care provider.
Then follow-up with your supervisor.

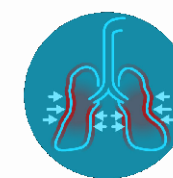
DO NOT ENTER if you have:



FEVER



COUGH



SHORTNESS OF
BREATH



CDC/ORA 3/19/20 2:00 PM

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

KEEPING FAMILY AND EMPLOYEES SAFE

Plans of Work

- Assign jobs/tasks that can be done without the presence of another, if possible
- Instruct employees to physically distance six feet if a shared worksite is necessary
- Remember workers may be asymptomatic and physically difficult work activity can cause spread of droplets outside the recommended six feet of distancing
- Utilize separate transportation
- Consider grouping employees to work in teams, to limit individual exposure

KEEPING FAMILY AND EMPLOYEES SAFE

Consider the levels of risk associated with various jobs workers perform

- Where, how, and to what sources of coronavirus might workers be exposed
 - General public
 - Customers
 - Elevator or Ag Business employees
 - On-site service providers
 - Coworkers
- Off farm/non-work risk factors at home and in community settings

KEEPING FAMILY AND EMPLOYEES SAFE

- Sanitize common gathering places
 - shops
 - lunch areas
 - office spaces
- Clean/disinfect high touch areas
 - door handles
 - phones
 - keyboards
 - light switches
 - monitors/touchpads
 - faucets/sinks
 - restroom areas

KEEPING FAMILY AND EMPLOYEES SAFE

If the farm uses linens or provides uniforms/clothing

- To minimize the possibility of dispersing virus through the air, avoid shaking dirty laundry.
- Launder items using the warmest appropriate water and dry items completely.
- Clean and disinfect laundry carts.

KEEPING FAMILY AND EMPLOYEES SAFE

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

The shortage of PPE this season, particularly N95 respirators, will present obstacles.

- Pesticides cannot be applied without the label-required PPE
- Home-made masks are not a substitute
- The EPA has not made any exemptions of requirements
- Alternative products or practices are recommended
- Seek information from the OSU Pesticide Safety Education Program or Ohio EPA
- Separate, yet worth noting – FEMA and NIOSH have published recommendations for healthcare workers on extending the use times of PPE through decontamination and reuse strategies, using best practices to sustain PPE supplies

Knowing an optimal equipment use plan would allow for a single operator to reduce virus spread, what protocols can you put in place on your farm?

EQUIPMENT USE AND SANITATION PLANS

- Eliminate ride sharing in all vehicles if possible
- Sanitize each operator cabin upon entry and departure
- Provide cleaning supplies for each tractor/employee

EQUIPMENT USE AND SANITATION PLANS

- Sanitizing all touch points within tractors and equipment
 - Exterior handrails or grab bars
 - Doorknob or handle
 - Steering wheel
 - Controls
 - Handles to open windows
 - Key or start button
 - Seat
- Consider exterior equipment touch points
 - Hydraulic connections
 - Hitch pins
 - 3-point hitch
 - PTO
 - Fuel caps

EQUIPMENT USE AND SANITATION PLANS

For soft (porous) surfaces such as tractor seats remove visible dirt and clean with appropriate cleaners.

- Procedure may require dry times between users.
- Consider covering operator seats with a trash bag, changing between each operator.

DELIVERIES AND ON-SITE CUSTOM SERVICES

- Identify and coordinate a drop-off location for supplier deliveries, away from on-farm high traffic areas and housing.
- Create specific instructions for drop-off deliveries.
 - Provide the location and all procedures needed at the drop-off point.
 - Create signage to easily identify drop-off points.
 - List all point of contacts with contact information to assist with questions leading up to delivery and upon arrival.
 - Practice distancing with delivery drivers. Avoiding personal interaction is best.

DELIVERIES AND ON-SITE CUSTOM SERVICES

On-site services provided by outside sources

- Plan before the arrival of technicians, mechanics, applicators
- Instruct service provider to utilize own transportation to and from the field if the work or service is to be performed off site

REFERENCE MATERIALS:

Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19, <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>

Steps on the Farm to Manage COVID-19, <https://www.ncga.com/stay-informed/media/in-the-news/article/2020/03/steps-on-the-farm-to-manage-covid-19>

On Farm Biosecurity to Keep Us and Employees Safe, <https://agcrops.osu.edu/newsletter/corn-newsletter/2020-08/farm-biosecurity-keep-us-and-employees-safe#.XpSH-39bwpl.twitter>

COVID-19 Guidance for farm employers, <https://farms.extension.wisc.edu/covid-19-guidance-for-farm-employers/?fbclid=IwAR0eWUgzsqbqEkYP4hWt2gVE8QRH5ca-Jzdwpd5NA6icCrM0uXCfYZzxTj4>

Six possible impacts of COVID-19 on farming, <https://www.morningagclips.com/six-possible-impacts-of-covid-19-on-farming/?fbclid=IwAR01wkTg6AKfxikpQs-PKsalcVMKsybNFYRq2ERMzzIV1YBNnL6XQiomubQ>

Planning for a Pandemic, <https://www.ocj.com/2020/04/planning-for-a-pandemic/>

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GROUP DISCUSSION POINTS

Do you have a contingency plan for your farm?

What ideas do you have for implementing distancing between employees? What rules do you plan to establish for equipment use?

Will deliveries and equipment repair be an issue at your operation?

Will you face workforce challenges if someone falls ill?