

Guidance for COVID-19 protocols on farms

As at 26 March 2020

The following is guidance on protocols for farms to follow during ALERT 4. This information can also be used by farmers to fill in their registration forms if needed.

1. How are you ensuring that workers and others at work are observing social distancing to and from work, during work and during rest breaks?

- During work hours, farm processes will be designed to ensure staff adhere to distancing rules. All staff will be obliged to record how they did not break the distancing rules outside of work hours.
- All staff are required to report to the owner/manager at the start of their shift.
- There is a discussion at the start of each day with each staff member about what needs to be done on the farm and how these tasks will be conducted while observing social distancing and hygiene requirements. Plans are put in place in advance to deal with essential services/contractors coming onto the property and how these will be managed.
- Staff attendance, start and stop times will be recorded should this be required for case tracking.
- No socialising or congregating by employees. When clocking out, move quickly offsite or into their separate accommodation area.
- Rest breaks are staggered (to reduce number of workers in any one place), and workers are encouraged to take breaks outside, while observing distancing rules wherever they are. For large operators separate areas or tables will need to be designated for separate teams, or for shearing/mustering teams.
- Smoko room table/chair surfaces are cleaned before and after each break. Cleaning times must be documented and audited.

2. What personal hygiene steps have you put in place for workers to reduce the likelihood of virus spread at work?

GENERAL MEASURES [This will be easier for larger operators to implement; smaller operators will need to adapt to their circumstances]

- Owner or manager of the farm to be responsible for COVID-19 prevention or, on smaller operations, a senior staff member will assume that role.
- Records will be kept for each person working on the farm, including living arrangements. There is a daily conversation with each staff member to check that they have not met anyone outside of working hours that they shouldn't have.
- Where feasible, staff will be living in accommodation in isolation, meaning they either live alone (at home, or on site – e.g. in campervan), or the others they reside with (such as family members) are in lock down.



- Where this is not possible (e.g. shared worker accommodation), a strict set of protocols around achieving separated living arrangements needs to be implemented. Where workers share accommodation, shared transport may be appropriate, so long as those workers do not come into contact with anyone else.
- Where on-site accommodation can be organised, either motor home, cabin or existing accommodation, there will be no sharing of rooms except by couples in existing relationships. All food, crockery and utensils will be unique to that person. Linen towels etc will be laundered under MoH guidelines in terms of temperature and disinfecting.

SPECIFIC MEASURES

- Management will relentlessly champion a culture of absolute compliance stressing that violation of compliance rules will result in disciplinary procedures
- Each day begins with a daily pre-shift (outdoors) briefing emphasising:
 - Critical importance of personal hygiene (keep 2m distance; cover cough/sneezes; frequent handwashing and equipment sanitising; not touching your mouth, nose or eyes.)
 - Reminder of other workplace practices (described in this document) and of their critical importance to protect worker and community health
 - “Essential business” operation is a privilege, and ours to lose. Mandatory compliance with all “essential business” rules are required; any non-compliance will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter. Staff in breach may be suspended and sent home immediately to self-isolate.
- We regularly disinfect all surfaces in commonly used areas (smoko rooms/tables /benchtops /toilet/ door handles/ screens).
- Internal doors, where fire safety rules allow, are wedged open to minimise touching in common areas.
- Any meals provided to staff will be prepared and served under MoH guidelines. [Effective cleaning protocols are in place for cutlery and crockery]. [Microwavable, sealed prepared meals may be used if available]
- Meetings will be conducted digitally, however when necessary to have a group meeting, the groups will only be pre-arranged teams and where possible, conducted outside under cover and number of attendees are kept small.
- Workers are provided with spray bottles containing sanitiser solution and/or soap and water and must use them regularly.
- Sharing of tools is avoided wherever possible; where not possible shared tools are required to be sanitised between use, using a sanitiser spray, methylated spirits, anti-viral wipes, a fresh 0.5% hydrogen peroxide/water solution, or a bleach solution.
- Equipment, and machinery (e.g. bins; trays; vehicle cabs, steering wheels and door handles) are regularly disinfected (frequency depends on use rate, but always when a different worker uses it) using a sanitizer spray, methylated spirits, anti-viral wipes or a bleach solution.
- Where two drivers need to use the same vehicle, whether it be a ute or tractor, the cab will be sanitised between drivers.

3. What existing, or additional personal protective equipment could you introduce that would reduce the likelihood of virus spread at work?

- Ensure workers have their own protective gear for relevant tasks and do not share.

4. What steps are you taking to limit access to your plants apart from essential workers?

- Non-essential staff and visitors are forbidden from entering the site (signage on all entrances) without express permission of the designated COVID-19 manager.
- A register is kept of all visitors, including their name; date and time of entry and exit.
- Permission only given if the presence of the person on site is considered essential, and a health questionnaire has been completed for that person.
- Where possible, the timing of visit must be arranged to occur at a time of least risk of exposure to others.
- If any unauthorised person enters the property, staff will keep their distance and immediately call the owner/manager or police (if necessary) to get them to leave.

5. How are you isolating staff, or parts of your processing plants, so that virus spread would be contained should it occur?

- Non-essential personnel have been required to stay home.
- Staff use separate vehicles where possible, have breaks and lunch at different times from other staff, and in different places.
- Equipment is assigned to be used by specific staff only and all control surfaces sanitised between staff usage.
- Team allocations should take into account any shared living arrangements. Preferably, shared accommodation arrangements should match team isolation and eliminate staff from different shifts/teams living together. This may be difficult to arrange, given the diversity of workers' accommodation arrangements. If not possible, heightened separations at home should be encouraged.
- Where contract labour force workers (eg shearers or musterers) are housed in shared accommodation on farm, strict hygiene is observed; sleeping arrangements spread out; and distancing rules observed.

6. What arrangements have you put in place for staff to report any illness and remove themselves from work?

- All workers have been advised that any staff member feeling at all unwell, for any reason, should stay home, and report to the owner/manager by phone to a specified number.



- Workers are encouraged to pay careful attention to their wellbeing and that of their colleagues at work, and any worker member feeling unwell while at work must leave the site immediately and inform the owner/manager by phone.
- The owner/ manager is responsible for follow-up and ensuring that ongoing support is being provided to the worker
- Any workers who call in sick will be paid sick leave (regardless of entitlements).

7. What arrangement have you put in place for staff to report any suspected exposure to COVID-19?

- Any staff member who suspects they may have been exposed to COVID-19 should stay home (or if at work, leave immediately), and immediately report to the owner/manager by phone to a specified number, and to contact Healthline 0800 611 116.

8. What actions would you take should a staff member be suspected of or confirmed as having COVID-19?

- See responses to Q6 and Q7

9. How do you ensure that staff at particular risk of COVID-19 identify themselves and are isolated from work?

- Workers over 70 required to stay home
- Workers required to disclose any underlying health conditions that make them higher risk and asked to stay home.
- Workers living with vulnerable relatives/family may also need to stay home.

10. How will you ensure that your workers observe 'stay at home' rules at the conclusion of each working day?

- Check at the start of each shift that team members all obeyed the rules (peer pressure to comply for everyone benefits the whole team).
- Could require workers to email Google map verification (time, date screen shot, texted to log); providing internet/cell phone records.

