

Agriculture

This document is intended for employers, workers and customers/participants of the Agricultural sector, as an overview of potential hazards in the workplace due to COVID-19.

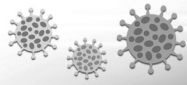
In all cases, guidance from local public health authorities must be followed and general COVID-19 prevention practices should be implemented, as outlined in:

www.ccohs.ca/pdfs/covid-general.pdf

You may also wish to refer to our Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) [Tip Sheets](#) for the Manufacturing, Food Processing, Transportation, Retail, and other associated sectors.

Human Resources / Crew Management

- Develop a [business continuity plan](#) to minimize operational disruptions, including how to deal with increased staff absenteeism, and procedures for responding to an outbreak.
- Regularly communicate with all workers about COVID-19. Provide daily reminders and education about COVID-19 prevention measures, signs and symptoms, and the current status of the surrounding community.
- Communicate using language suitable for the workers age, ability, reading level, and language preferences. If possible, provide information in additional languages for TFWs.
- Notify workers in advance if there are changes to screening measures and policies.
- Set a policy for what is expected of workers if they get sick, have symptoms, or if an exposure is reported.
- Ensure there is a communication procedure in place to allow workers to report COVID-19 exposure concerns quickly.
- On arrival each day, check-in and assess all workers using screening criteria from your local public health authority.
- Minimize contact during shift sign-in. Have the supervisor sign in for people (or provide separate pens), or have people text the supervisor. Clean any sign-in devices between users.
- Maintain an updated list of employees that are currently working in each area.
- If there are fewer workers available, make sure essential roles such as trained supervision and first aid or emergency response persons are still present.
- Schedule for any additional time that may be needed due to reduced staff, performing risk assessments, physical distancing measures, hygiene measures, cleaning and disinfecting, and following other protocols to perform work safely.
- Evaluate if any worker can perform their job from home (e.g., administrative staff).
- Encourage employees to only work at one agricultural job location.
- Keep on-site and off-site workers separate to reduce exposure risk and community spread.
- Create cohorts of workers (bubbles, teams, crews) if possible:
 - The use of cohorts reduces the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and helps with contact tracing if a positive COVID-19 case is found in the workplace.
 - Each cohort should stay physically distant from other cohorts.
 - If living on-site, keep the cohort together in the same bunkhouse.
 - Schedule the cohort to work and take breaks together.
 - Arrange buses or shuttles to transport the cohort to and from the worksite.
 - Limit social activities to only those within the cohort.



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- While respecting physical distancing measures, supervisors are still required to make sure that workers are performing their tasks safely.
- Make sure workers are trained to work safely, including when replacing the duties of others.
- Limit the number of workers allowed to congregate in an area at the same time.
- Review processes such as harvesting, sorting, packaging, material pick-up and delivery, and maintenance activities, and modify them to reduce crowding and worker interactions.
- Adjust work rotations and schedules to limit worker interactions.
- Stagger shifts, breaks, mealtimes, equipment distribution, meetings, training, safety talks, and orientations where possible.
- Establish zones in the facility and restrict employees from entering zones they do not perform work in or need to access (does not apply in emergency situations).
- Group recreation events may need to be cancelled or modified to respect gathering limits.
- Hold meetings in an outside or a large well-ventilated indoor space.
- Hold verbal or electronic meetings and orientations.
- Submit documents electronically, or wash hands after handling papers.
- Consider reviewing policies on the use of personal cell phones. When done safely, using mobile phones can promote physical distancing while allowing effective communication (avoid sharing phones).

Isolation Measures

- Temporary foreign workers (TFWs) must undergo a mandatory 14-day isolation period before starting any kind of work. Follow all government instructions for TFWs.
- Ensure there is a risk management plan that considers what to do if large numbers of workers need to be quarantined or require medical care.
- Make every effort to keep workers with symptoms isolated.
- Workers living off-site who are symptomatic, have been exposed to someone ill, or have recently travelled outside Canada should self-isolate at home, and not be allowed on-site or to interact with other workers.
- If a worker who lives on-site in congregate housing (bunkhouse, residence) becomes ill:
 - Immediately isolate them in a separate space or designated isolation area, with their own bathroom if possible.
 - Notify the local public health authority for further assessment and guidance.
 - Call 911 or emergency services if symptoms are life threatening.
 - Arrange for food and other essential items to be delivered to them, with appropriate precautions for delivery and pick up of items.
 - Thoroughly clean and disinfect their bunk area. Contain and wash their towels, sheets, and clothing separately as soon as possible. Clean and disinfect any hard surface items such as personal eating utensils and work equipment.
 - Provide secure storage for workers personal belongings if they must be isolated or relocated.
- As a precaution, do not allow symptomatic workers to directly handle or package farm produce.
- It is unknown if livestock can become infected with COVID-19, or if the livestock would show symptoms. As a precaution, do not allow symptomatic workers to handle, feed, or interact with livestock.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- PPE is equipment worn by a worker to minimize exposure to specific hazards. PPE does not reduce the hazard itself nor does it guarantee permanent or total protection. In general, PPE must meet regulated testing and certification standards. Non-medical masks are useful in reducing the spread of COVID-19, but are not considered to be PPE.



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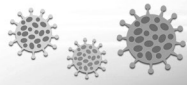
- Continue to use PPE for existing occupational safety hazards and emergencies, as directed by applicable laws and your employer.
- Use PPE for COVID-19 if it is required or recommended by your local public health authorities.
- If workers are required to wear PPE, train them on how to wear, remove, work with, and care for the equipment, and to understand its limitations.
- Clean and disinfect any shared PPE before you wear it.
- Wash hands before wearing and after removing PPE.
- Provide uniforms that are laundered by a service or advise workers to change and wash their uniform after work.

Non-Medical Masks

- Follow the non-medical mask recommendations from your public health agency, or other authority. Note that people may choose to wear non-medical masks regardless if there is a formal requirement.
- Non-medical masks help to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by blocking respiratory droplets, but they are not certified PPE. PHAC recommends wearing a three-layer non-medical mask; such as a layer of filter material sandwiched between two layers of tightly woven fabric.
- A non-medical mask should not be worn by anyone who is unable to remove it without assistance (e.g., due to their age or ability).
- Wear the non-medical mask correctly, making sure the nose and mouth are covered. Do not touch the mask while wearing it.
- Be aware that non-medical masks have limitations, and improper mask use and disposal can increase the risk of infection.
- Change your non-medical mask if it becomes wet or soiled. You may wish to bring a second mask in a clean paper bag, envelope, or container that does not trap moisture.
- Store reusable soiled masks in a separate bag or container. Launder them before re-use.
- Do not touch the outside of the mask while removing it, and wash your hands when you are finished.
- Consider using a transparent mask or face shield for persons that may require that visibility.
- Do not allow the mask to be a hazard to other activities, such as getting caught on moving machinery or equipment.

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Develop a cleaning and disinfection program, with schedules and checklists for each work area.
- Focus on commonly touched surfaces such as tools, farm equipment and machinery controls, pens, radios, door handles, handrails, plexiglass barriers, light switches, sink and shower taps, toilet flush levers, vending machines, tables, chairs, kettles, microwaves, etc.
- Clean and disinfect shared equipment and touched surfaces before and after each use.
- Clean workspaces, bunkhouses, washrooms and portable toilets, kitchens, lunchrooms, offices, trailers, and other shared spaces at least once a day.
- Clean vehicles between users (keys, steering wheel, gear shift, controls, vents, belts, seats, interior and exterior door handles, etc.).
- Provide access to hand washing stations or hand sanitizer dispensers in prominent locations throughout the team/worker accommodations, work sites, and washrooms. If hands are visibly dirty, they must be washed with soap and water. If plumbing is not available, provide a spouted water container and catch basin, with water, soap, and paper towels.
- Use a disinfectant or bleach solution to destroy or inactivate the virus.
 - Use a disinfectant with a drug identification number (DIN). This number means that it has been approved for use in Canada.

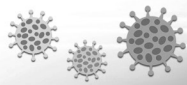


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- If household or commercial disinfectant cleaning products are not available, hard surfaces can be disinfected using a mixture of 5 mL of bleach (5% sodium hypochlorite) and 250 mL of water. Test surfaces before using a bleach solution. Bleach can be corrosive.
- If liquids can be withstood, disinfect high-touch electronic devices (keyboards, mice, tablets, smartphones) with alcohol or disinfectant wipes.
- Follow the cleaning product manufacturer's instructions, including those for personal protective equipment (PPE) and ventilation.
- Use disposable or dedicated re-usable cloths for cleaning. Change the cloths daily or when they become visibly soiled.
- Apply the disinfectant to a clean cloth. Saturate the cloth before treating touch points. Reapply as needed and between surfaces.
- Apply enough disinfectant to leave a visible film on the surface.
- Allow the surface to air dry.

Facility Management (field sites and indoor operations)

- When putting COVID-19 [control measures](#) in place, first use the most effective one you can. For example, physical measures such as barriers are more effective than changing workers behaviour. Continue to evaluate how effective the controls are and make changes if needed.
- Adjust production outputs and schedules to reflect any necessary changes.
- Continue to follow required biosecurity and food safety standards.
- Control site movement to reduce gathering at vehicles, washrooms, and other high traffic areas.
- Increase the spacing between workstations to ensure 2 metres (6 feet) physical distancing.
- Install head-height plexiglass barriers between workstations.
- Use floor markings, signs, and other visual cues in appropriate areas to encourage physical distancing.
- Designate travel paths through field rows, building aisles, and to/from goods collection points, so workers do not have to pass each other closely.
- Have workers check before entering a shared space such as a work shed or barn, so they do not run into other workers.
- Have workers wash hands or use hand sanitizer when entering and exiting production areas, and before and after using equipment.
- If wash stations with soap and water are not close or accessible to the work area, provide hand sanitizer stations.
- Sharing of equipment, tools, instruments, etc. should be avoided where possible. Consider purchasing additional equipment if required. Assign each worker their own labelled equipment where possible.
- When equipment must be shared, limit the number of people that use it, and clean and disinfect between users.
- Reduce the number of surfaces that must be touched to access facilities.
- Replace garbage cans with no-touch receptacles or remove lids that require contact to open.
- Install no-touch sensor controls for sink taps, toilet flush, soap and paper towel dispensers.
- Replace round doorknobs with handles and push-plates that can be operated using wrists.
- Remove communal coat-check areas and shared footwear or clothing. Allow workers to store their personal items separately or in sealed bins or bags if they do not have lockers.



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Ventilation

- Powerful cooling fans might increase the spread of COVID-19 in enclosed spaces. If the work is indoors, use other ways to keep rooms cool, such having less people or livestock in each area, shutting off hot machinery when not in use, adjusting building ventilation systems, opening doors and windows, and installing air conditioning units.
- Avoid central recirculation where possible.
- Ventilation systems should be adjusted to:
 - Increase filtration efficiency to highest level appropriate for the system.
 - Increase fresh air flow/percentage of outdoor air (increase % of outdoor air in HVAC air supply, open windows and doors, etc.).
 - Limit use of demand-controlled ventilation; keep system running at the optimal setting.
 - Explore the use of portable high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtration units.
 - Consult an HVAC professional before making changes to the ventilation system.

On-Site Shared Living Accommodations (congregate housing, residences, bunkhouses)

- Discourage visitors and off-site workers from entering the on-site workers accommodations.
- Each person should have their own room, if feasible.
- If sleeping areas are shared, the bunks must be at least 2 metres (6 feet) apart, and oriented head to toe. The number of bunks in sleeping areas may need to be reduced. Bunks might need to be relocated, or additional sleeping areas may need to be built or re-purposed from other uses. Avoid using bunk beds. Protective barriers that can be cleaned and disinfected such as plastic curtains or plexiglass panels can be installed between bunks.
- Use physical distancing strategies for all common areas. Consider closing non-essential common areas, if practical.
- Make sure all sleeping areas, kitchens, cafeterias, washrooms, and other shared accommodations have adequate ventilation and are cleaned frequently. Ideally, cleaning can be done at least daily by the occupants.
- Wash sheets, towels and clothing frequently. Do not shake dirty laundry. Use disposable gloves and perform hand hygiene after handling laundry. Clean and disinfect hampers and bins.
- Use safe food handling practices to reduce handling of shared food and utensils (e.g., do not use self-serve buffets, have servers dish food, etc.).
- Workers may not be prohibited from leaving the farm to visit the community; however, the need to do so frequently can be minimized:
 - Set up direct deposit, internet, and phone access so workers can more easily manage their funds, buy personal supplies, and communicate with family directly from their accommodations.
 - Arrange with local shops for supplies to be delivered regularly.
 - Consider selecting a single shopper for each cohort or the entire farm crew.

Transportation

- Use individual transportation when available. Encourage workers to avoid carpooling, crowded public transit, taxis, or rideshare services to limit community spread. Allow off-site workers with personal vehicles to park at the work site instead of sharing group transportation.
- If carpooling or using company vehicles is a necessity, the following control practices should be used:
 - Assess workers for symptoms before they use group transportation such as a bus, van, or truck to get to and from the work site. Anyone that is symptomatic should be isolated. Consult your public health agency to determine the best approach for getting symptomatic individuals to a safe setting without putting others at risk.
 - If cohorts or teams of employees have been established, then carpooling/shuttles should be limited to cohort members only.



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- Dedicate a vehicle and driver to each cohort, or clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces after each carpool or shuttle trip (for example, door handles, handrails, seatbelt buckles).
- Maintain physical distancing. Passengers should be spaced apart as much as possible, such as assigned seating in a staggered pattern. Consider using multiple or larger vehicles.
- Maximize fresh air ventilation inside the vehicle.
- Do not allow passengers to crowd together when getting in and out of the vehicle.
- Encourage workers in a shared vehicle space to maintain physical distancing, to wear non-medical masks or face coverings, to follow coughing and sneezing etiquette, and to use hand hygiene before entering the vehicle and when arriving at the destination.

External Service Providers

- All services entering the farm should be screened for health status and contact history. Have them sign-in and provide their phone number for contact tracing. Do not allow those who are symptomatic, have been exposed to someone ill, or have recently travelled outside Canada to visit the farm.
- Limit or reschedule non-essential visits to the site by contractors, supply chain partners, vendors or other visitors.
- In all cases where a service provider must visit the farm, provide them with hand washing facilities, maintain physical distancing as much as possible, and have them wear a non-medical mask. Minimize exposure to workers or farm family.
- Clean and disinfect the work area before and after the external service provider does their work.
- Cooperate with Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) inspectors to safely accommodate their inspection activities.
- Consult with veterinary services before they arrive on-site about their own sanitation and isolation procedures and requirements. Minimize the number of farm workers who are needed to assist, while still maintaining animal handling safety.
- Communicate with delivery or trade services about your physical distancing requirements, and also work with those services to assist with their COVID-19 precautions. Methods of delivery of feed stock, fuel, and other bulk supplies may vary by supplier.
- Minimize contact with transportation services when shipping farm produce and livestock as much as possible.

For further information on COVID-19, refer to the Public Health Agency of Canada

<https://www.canada.ca/coronavirus>

Note that this guidance includes just some of the adjustments organizations can make during a pandemic. Adapt this list by adding your own good practices and policies to meet your organization's specific needs.

Disclaimer: As public and occupational health and safety information is changing rapidly, local public health authorities should be consulted for specific, regional guidance. This information is not intended to replace medical advice or legislated health and safety obligations. Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy, currency and completeness of the information, CCOHS does not guarantee, warrant, represent or undertake that the information provided is correct, accurate or current. CCOHS is not liable for any loss, claim, or demand arising directly or indirectly from any use or reliance upon the information.