



CENTER FOR
DairyEXCELLENCE



For Immediate Release

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COVID-19 FARM GUIDELINES AVAILABLE TO PENNSYLVANIA DAIRY INDUSTRY *Dairy Professionals Encouraged to Follow Recommendations to Navigate Crisis*

Harrisburg, Pa. – In the midst of COVID-19 (coronavirus), dairy farming and supporting agriculture businesses are considered essential and can continue to operate as normal. However, it is important that all farm businesses take the proper precautions to protect their employees and their business while conducting day-to-day operations.

The Center for Dairy Excellence, the Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association, and the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania (PDMP) are working together to provide resources to help the state's dairy industry and individual farms follow federal and state orders to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and navigate new constraints on business.

All dairy farmers and farm businesses should follow the below recommendations to ensure their dairy business is able to navigate day-to-day operations during the crisis. Dairy industry professionals are encouraged to share these recommendations with farms as well.

How to Protect Employees

- **Have an open, honest conversation with employees** about coronavirus, how it spreads, and how to prevent infection. Communicate often as you receive new information. Visit cdc.gov/coronavirus to view [printable fact sheets and posters](#) from the CDC to explain to employees the importance of protecting themselves and each other from the virus. Consider posting this information throughout the frequented locations on your farm.
- **Employ strategies to practice social distancing and find virtual ways to communicate with your farm staff.** Start a group text with employees to give direction, reports from shift to shift, create a Facebook group, or implement three-way calling. Consider utilizing teleconference and web conferencing services for longer discussions. Do not hold face-to-face staff meetings.
- **Provide cleaning supplies to your employees,** including disinfectant, disinfectant wipes, buckets, and mops. Review safety procedures for handling these products. Frequently used sinks may run out of towels and soap more frequently. Keep them stocked.

- **Instruct sick employees to stay home.** Coming to the farm while sick can turn an individual problem into a workforce catastrophe.
- **Create plans if employees or managers become sick.** If an employee would become sick, communicate health issues with any employees still coming to the farm. If a manager becomes sick, remotely assign temporary management responsibilities to another employee or consider asking an outside manager to step in.
- **Adhere to CDC social distancing guideline in all interaction with employees and consultants** and postpone group meetings and non-essential face-to-face meetings. Avoid work shift overlaps and instead use whiteboards, chat groups on cell phone and other written forms to communicate on the farm to transfer information and instruction. Do not use common markers and erasers, and disinfect shared computer keyboards and mouse before and after each use.
- **Cross-train employees for critical jobs** using virtual communication. Determine which tasks must continue on current schedule, which ones can be reduced, and which tasks can be discontinued until they are practical to start again.
- **Prepare “Worker Travel Letters”** to have on hand and provide to employees in case “Shelter In Place” restrictions are put in place. Providing these letters to your employees to have with them as they travel back and forth to work is critical. [Download letter templates](#) and be sure to incorporate your farm letterhead.
- **Become familiar with the new federal ‘Families First Coronavirus Response Act’ with your employees** while instructing them to stay home if sick. It was passed by the U.S. House and Senate and signed by the President. It applies to businesses with less than 500 employees and includes the following provisions:
 - Will be in effect for one year
 - Provides 80 hours of sick leave: full pay for sick or quarantined employee, 2/3 pay if caring for another
 - Expands FMLA, up to 12 weeks of job-protected leave for quarantine, sickness, or to care for others, at 2/3 pay
 - Employers can take tax credits against the social security tax to cover the benefits provided. If costs exceed social security, the government will send the employer a check.

How to Manage Farm Deliveries and Visits

- **Create a farm visit log for individuals who visit your farm.** Record their names, contact information, and whether they entered the facility and/or interacted with your employees or simply delivered/picked up items.

- **Establish procedures for how your farm will interact with milk haulers.** Minimize employee contact with milk haulers, sanitize surfaces handled by the hauler, and provide disposable gloves.
- **Establish procedures for deliveries on your farm.** Pick a dedicated drop-off location and create specific instructions for drop-off deliveries. Consider placing a dropbox near the road before on-farm entry.
- **Follow and respect the safety measures implemented by supply companies.** According to Dairy Farmers of America, they are taking extra precautions when collecting milk at member farms and making deliveries to processing facilities. They are only allowing essential personnel to visit farms and limiting hauler access to essential areas of farms/plants. Feed companies and other delivery services are also adding additional precautions for their employees.

How to Manage Dairy Products, Supplies and Services

- **Remember to use necessity as a barometer.** If someone's presence is not essential or absolutely necessary for your business to continue to operate, then postpone their visit until the restrictions have been lifted. Use virtual technology or phone conversations for consultations.
- **Keep good records.** If you do have to discard milk due to COVID-19, remember to record the amount of milk dumped and the date it was discarded. This information should be recorded in case there is federal relief or other forms of payment made available for discarded milk.
- **Create a contingency plan** to prepare if dairy or medical supplies become in short supply. Consider advance ordering semen in case the supply is disrupted, but be mindful of your fellow farmers who will also need supplies and don't buy them out of stock.
- **Leave samples in the reception area for DHIA services.** Testing and lab services are continuing, but field staff are taking precautions and lab access is limited to essential personnel.
- **Communicate with your veterinarian.** Large-animal vets are considered essential, but they may be operating with reduced service. Consider postponing services that are not critical, and communicate remotely when asking for assistance, if possible.

Contact Information

Visit centerfordairyexcellence.org/covid-19-farm-resources/ for additional COVID-19 farm resources. Information and recommendations are changing daily. Updates will be shared with the dairy community as they are available.

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The Center for Dairy Excellence is a non-profit organization initiated by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture in 2004. Bringing together people from more than 40 different dairy organizations in Pennsylvania, the Center's mission is to enhance the profitability of the dairy industry by empowering people, creating partnerships, and increasing the availability and use of resources. Learn more at centerfordairyexcellence.org.

The Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association is a non-profit organization with a focus on supporting Pennsylvania dairy farms, agricultural scholarships, youth programs and educational programs across the state. Learn more at padairymens.com.

PDMP is a not-for-profit organization of progressive, positive-minded dairy producers and agribusiness leaders working together to advance the dairy industry in Pennsylvania through improved productivity and profitability. Programs offered by PDMP are designed by dairy producers for dairy producers. For more information on PDMP, visit their website at pdmp.org.