

COVID-19 Recommendations for Dairy: What to Do on Your Farm

We realize this is a challenging time for everyone, filled with stressful conditions and new constraints on business. As the dairy industry navigates COVID-19, it's important to follow Federal and state guidance and orders to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus. Dairy farming and supporting agriculture businesses are considered essential and can continue to operate as normal.

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

Thanks to Cornell Agricultural Workforce Development and Cornell PRO-DAIRY for organizing these recommendations. [Click here](#) to view a full synopsis of their "COVID-19 and Your Dairy" presentation. Some of these recommendations are exclusive to New York.

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.
 - [Here are 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 (the Stop the Spread of Germs poster in Spanish is very good to ensure understanding).
- **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, etc, 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.
 - [View a list of free web conferencing tools](#).
- **Provide cleaning supplies to your employees**, including disinfectant, disinfectant wipes, buckets, mops, etc. Review safety procedures for handling these products. Frequently used sinks may run out of towels and soap more frequently. Keep them stocked.
 - [View a list of CDC approved cleaning products](#) to disinfect against COVID-19.
- **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, but 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](#). Copy and paste onto 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.
 - [View delivery recommendations](#) outlined by the PA Dept. of Agriculture.
- **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.

REMINDERS

- Cows cannot catch COVID-19. Humans cannot give it to cows or catch it from them.
- There is no current evidence to suggest that COVID-19 is transmitted through food consumption.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please contact us if you have any questions. Information and recommendations are changing daily, so frequent communication will be key. We're all in this together.

[Jayne Sebright](#)

Center for Dairy Excellence
717-817-1376

[Caroline Novak](#)

Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania (PDMP)
717-319-9540

[Dave Smith](#)

PA Dairymen's Association
717-679-1357