

Slowing the Spread of COVID-19: Guidance for Farms and Forestry Businesses *UPDATED May 11, 2020*

As our nation works diligently to slow the spread of COVID-19, agriculture remains vital for the most important aspects of our daily lives. Governor Bill Lee has acknowledged agriculture is an essential service. **The agriculture industry must do its part to protect the health of the public and employees and to keep the supply chain strong.**

This is *not* business as usual. It is critical that all participants in agribusiness activities follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines minimize risk of infection, and commit to the [Tennessee Pledge](#) to help Tennesseans return to work in a safe environment, restore their livelihoods, and reboot our state's economy.

Following consultation with Governor Bill Lee's Economic Recovery Group, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture makes the following recommendations to farm operators and forestry businesses during this health emergency:

- Any person showing signs of illness or who had recent contact with a sick person should stay home. Consider the use of [COVID-19 symptom](#) screening questions and/or signage.
- Implement cleaning and disinfection practices according to [CDC guidelines](#), with regular sanitization of high-touch surfaces at least every two hours.
- Do not allow people to congregate. Restrict access to common areas. Employees and customers should maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others.
- No matter if indoors or outside, [CDC recommends](#) wearing cloth face coverings in settings where social distancing is difficult to maintain. Note that children under age two should NOT wear cloth face coverings because of the danger of suffocation.
- Limit employees on site to essential people only. Allow other employees to work remotely if possible.
- Adjust work schedules to limit the number of employees on site at one time. When possible, stagger arrival and departure times, breaks, and meals to promote social distancing.
- Upon reporting to work, ask employees:
 - Have you been in close contact with someone confirmed to have COVID-19?
 - Are you experiencing a cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat?
 - Have you had a fever in the last 48 hours?
 - Have you had new loss of taste or smell?
 - Have you had vomiting or diarrhea in the last 24 hours?
- Employees should not be allowed to work if they answer "yes" to any of the above questions or their temperature exceeds 100.4 Fahrenheit. It is best practice to take employees' temperature with a no-touch thermometer each day upon arrival.

- Direct any employees who show signs of illness to leave the premises immediately and to contact their doctor.
- Upon reporting to work, require employees to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Encourage frequent handwashing throughout the day, especially after using the bathroom and before eating. If soap and water are not readily available, provide a hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- For indoor spaces that customers access, limit the number of customers to no more than 50% occupancy based on Tennessee's Building and Fire Code.
- For indoor spaces that customers access, employees should wear cloth face coverings and other personal protection items as recommended by the CDC.
- Use plastic barriers between customers and employees at service counters and clean the barriers at least every two hours.
- Offer curbside, pickup, and delivery service options to minimize contact.
- Determine how your farm or forestry business will operate if employees are unable to work.
- Determine who will manage operations if you are unable to work. It is advisable to have more than one person who can make decisions. Prepare and post operational instructions in an obvious location with digital backup.
- For livestock, prepare and post daily care instructions, along with contact information for the veterinarian. Have at least two weeks of food and medication on hand at all times.
- Identify alternate sources for critical supplies.
- Designate a drop-off location for deliveries away from high traffic areas. Provide instructions to vendors in advance of delivery to minimize direct interaction.
- **Communicate and enforce new policies with employees and the public.**

Every agribusiness should institute a response plan to maintain business operations, follow CDC recommendations to protect their employees and customers, and comply with local, state, and federal directives. The CDC has more information for businesses and employees [online](#).

These recommendations do not replace or supersede any requirements applicable to your operations pursuant to law or regulation. These guidelines are intended as a supplement to assist with safe operations during the COVID-19 pandemic and are subject to change.

The Tennessee Department of Agriculture is committed to providing the services you count on while also following CDC guidelines to safeguard the health of our staff and citizens. Access the latest information on Tennessee's response to COVID-19 [online](#) and follow @TNAgriculture on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for updates.

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