



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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June 5, 2020

Food Safety Program – Update to Industry

On March 23, the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) Food Safety Program suspended routine field activities to support efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19 and protect our staff and the public.

There is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with the transmission of COVID-19. You can read more at [FDA - Food Safety and COVID-19](#). The program is maintaining our webpage with current COVID-19 information: [WSDA Food Safety, COVID-19](#)

Food manufacturing and the employees who support it are a key part of the critical infrastructure workforce. WSDA and the Food Safety Program are committed to supporting the state's food and dairy industry during this challenging time.

Aligned with the state's phased "Safe Start" approach, the Food Safety Program is resuming additional field work, including Grade 'A' dairy, to support the safety of our state's food supply and economic vitality. Critical field activities, including food and dairy sampling for pathogenic bacteria, have been ongoing. However, additional field work will resume based on the following timeline:

- Dairy farm inspections and product sampling for Grade 'A' conformance – June
- State rating process for milk plants, farms and single service facilities – June
- Dairy plant inspections and equipment testing – July
- Manufactured food inspections – July
- Cottage food and marijuana infused edibles – August

This timeline is general and may be adjusted without further notice from the Food Safety Program. Our staff is monitoring their own health in alignment with CDC and Washington State Department of Health guidance. They will wear face coverings while maintaining appropriate sanitation and distancing guidelines as conditions require.

As a processor of food and dairy products in Washington, be aware of COVID-19 prevention requirements in our industry. Employers should keep up-to-date with guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Washington State departments of Labor & Industries and Health and make every effort to implement best practices that help protect employees.

Specific guidance for **food manufacturing and food warehousing** is found below:

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) Prevention in Agriculture and Related Industries [Fact Sheet](#)
- Food Processing-Warehouse Coronavirus (COVID-19) [Fact Sheet](#)

Dairy farms are included in [Proclamation 20-57](#) (Agricultural Worker Health) and are required to comply with provisions of the Agriculture COVID-19 Requirements, including a safety plan found [here](#). The specific requirements included in this plan do not apply to meat, food or dairy processing operations.

Best practices to protect food production workers from coronavirus include:

1. Maintaining social distancing of at least six feet, or use effective engineering or administrative controls.
2. Ensure adequate handwashing facilities and frequent handwashing.
3. Increase regular cleaning and sanitizing of common-touch surfaces.
4. Make sure sick employees stay home or go home and have procedures for workers to report a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case.
5. Educate workers in the language they understand about COVID-19 and how to prevent transmission.

The Food Safety Program continues to adjust along with you, and we are committed to supporting the food and agriculture industry. As you consider operational changes to your business in response to COVID-19 and the potential impact to food safety resulting from those changes, please continue to contact us as a resource.

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