



COVID-19 GUIDELINES

VERSION 2

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These guidelines have been prepared to assist egg farming businesses consider strategies to respond to the Covid-19/coronavirus outbreak.

The Guidelines cover issues and protocols that will assist in protecting the health of staff, their families and the broader community. They can also assist with business continuity, thereby ensuring egg supply is maintained, hen welfare is protected, egg farming businesses remain viable and staff jobs remain. The Guidelines are based on current government advice which is evolving rapidly and may be the subject of change.

How does it spread?

Coronavirus is spread person to person and is not transmitted through livestock such as laying hens. Food, including eggs, cannot be a source of transmission of the virus

Coronavirus is mainly spread by:

- Direct close contact with someone who is infected – generally within 1.5 meters
- Contact with an infected person who coughs or sneezes
- Someone touching their face after contact with objects or surfaces contaminated with droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze

Best defence

Good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best way to minimise the spread

Both at home and at work, all egg farm staff should:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet
- Cover coughs and sneezes (with a clean tissue or into your elbow), dispose of tissues, and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser afterwards
- Avoid touching the face, especially mouth, nose, and eyes
- To the greatest extent possible, stay at least 1.5 meters away from other staff at all times
- Stay away from work and other people at the first sign of symptoms

Continuing strict compliance with egg farm biosecurity and hygiene practices is also critical to minimising the spread of coronavirus.

Keep staff engaged

To maximise compliance and reduce staff anxiety, employers should:

- Brief all permanent and contract staff on coronavirus risks and the business protocols that have been introduced
- Explain why the protocols are important and must be complied with
- Assure staff there is no need for panic
- Explain that the egg industry is one of many essential services that will help the community to negotiate this crisis
- Provide regular reminders and updates as new information becomes available
- Display prominent signage (see downloadable examples for NSW Health [here](#), QLD Health [here](#), Vic Health [here](#) & [here](#)) at entry/exit points, work and common areas reminding staff of symptoms and to practice good hygiene, keep a distance of at least 1.5 meters and stay away from work if they are sick



Preventing introduction of the virus

If a staff member become unwell, telling them how to act becomes critically important

Ensure staff know the symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue, shortness of breath, runny nose, chills and body aches. Staff should also be encouraged to get the flu vaccine to minimise the risk of flu and misdiagnosis of coronavirus

Most importantly, staff experiencing symptoms should not come to work

They must:

- Immediately isolate and seek medical attention through a local doctor, Emergency Department or Healthdirect on 1800 022 222
- Notify their supervisors as soon as they start showing symptoms
- Notify their supervisors the time that they first noticed symptoms
- Not return to work until they are advised the outcome of any testing
- Notify their supervisor of the outcome of any medical investigation
- Provide evidence of the outcome of any medical investigation before returning to work

Supervisors should be advised to look for symptoms and act on them immediately

They must:

- Seek confirmation from staff that they are not showing symptoms on arrival at work
- Instruct staff showing symptoms to go home and follow the above guidelines

Ensure good hand hygiene practices are promoted and facilitated by:

- Conducting refresher training of staff in best-practice hand washing
- Providing hand washing and disinfection amenities for staff to use at entry and exit to production areas and in all staff common areas
- Encouraging use of hand washing and disinfection amenities through signage

Apply more stringent access requirements for entry into production areas, including:

- No entry for non-essential visitors, such as customers
- Communicating with potential non-essential visitors that access is not permitted
- Requesting confirmation from any essential visitors that they are not experiencing symptoms, have not been in contact with someone that is unwell and have not been overseas in the past 14 days

Preventing spread of the virus

Consider options to limit opportunities for contact between staff, including contractors or infection through contact with surfaces

This includes:

- Analysing where close physical contact between staff and contractors (e.g. truck drivers) could occur in all areas and considering ways to manage and minimise this contact
- Avoiding overlapping shifts wherever possible
- Maintaining a clear delineation of staff movements during, before and after shifts
- Increasing the period of time between shifts and conducting regular and thorough cleaning of common areas
- Document all procedures and monitoring processes, including corrective action
- Periodically review procedures to identify gaps and areas for improvement

Options to limit immediate close contacts between staff must also be considered

This includes:

- Maximising the physical separation of staff and encouraging strict compliance
- Avoiding unnecessary intermingling of staff in common areas
- Minimising the number of colleagues that each staff member comes in close contact with
- Minimising the frequency and duration of face to face meetings
- Identifying staff that may be able to work remotely
- Asking staff to avoid congregating in areas outside the workplace, such as carparks

Consider the use of personal protective equipment

Employers should:

- Maintain the same company practices for the use of PPE – masks are not currently recommended for healthy members of the public to contain coronavirus
- However, where roles mean it is impossible to maintain a distance of at least 1.5 meters between employees for a significant period consider implementing full head-to-toe PPE and use of face masks if available

MANAGING CLOSE CONTACTS

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The best way to ensure team and farm continuity is to limit close contacts of all staff

If a staff member becomes infected all close contacts will be required to self-isolate

- Without careful management this could mean the loss of entire teams
- There remains some inconsistency in the definition of close contacts but where a business can demonstrate effective protocols to manage coronavirus, a close contact should be:
 - anyone who has been within 1.5 meters of the infected person for a cumulative period of at least 2 hours at any time in the 24 hours prior to symptoms developing; and/or
 - an employee who has had face-to-face contact for a period of at least 15 minutes at any time in the 24 hours prior to symptoms developing (e.g. meeting or lunchroom)
- All efforts should be made to apply the measures in these Guidelines and ensure that no or few close contacts are identified in the event of an infection

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Staff showing symptoms but not confirmed

Follow the protocol for preventing introduction of the virus explained above

- Be prepared to identify any close contacts of the infected person quickly (see above)
- Maintain records of the staff that each staff member has worked with
- Maintain records of the staff that each staff member has been in close contact with

Confirmed infected staff

Staff that have been in close contact with the infected staff member should be advised to self-isolate immediately

- Be prepared to identify any close contacts of the infected person quickly (see above)
- All close contacts should be instructed to leave work and self-isolate at home for 14 days
- Ensure close contacts do not return to work for at least 14 days or longer if they develop symptoms
- Inform a local public health unit and food safety regulator of the confirmed infection as soon as possible, and provide details of any close contacts and their contact details
- Be prepared to provide authorities with evidence of protocols to manage the risk of coronavirus and records of compliance
- Allow any staff that are at high risk due to a pre-existing medical condition, e.g. heart disease, to stay home
- You may inform staff that a staff member or visitor may have been infected (the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner has [advised here](#) that privacy will not stop critical information sharing reasonably necessary to manage coronavirus)
- Undertake any cleaning or disinfection in addition to existing protocols that may assist in minimising the risk of further infection

Returning to work

Staff that have completed quarantine or isolation in compliance with health authorities do not pose an infection risk to other people

- Staff that have been required to be in quarantine or isolation and are not showing signs or symptoms of being unwell are permitted to return to their daily work activities
- Reassure staff that the return of staff from quarantine or isolation to work is safe



Welfare

Hen welfare will have to be carefully managed in the event of staff disruption

Farms must:

- Ensure feed and water availability is adequate for exclusion periods
- Consider scenarios and response plans to ensure welfare is not compromised
- Prioritise staff to ensure welfare standards are maintained

Supply chain disruption

Businesses need to consider any supplies and services that could be disrupted, and any options to minimise those disruptions

This includes investigating:

- Availability and alternative suppliers of PPE, sanitisers, cleaning agents
- Alternative suppliers of inputs from countries that may be impacted by coronavirus
- Availability of service providers required for business continuity

Reduced workforce

Contingency arrangements in the event of a diminished workforce need to be carefully thought through

Businesses should ask:

- Is there alternative labour available?
- How could new staff be trained in the context of coronavirus?
- Could the mix of egg products be adjusted to reduce labour requirements?
- Can available labour be used differently to maximise coverage?
- Can eggs be diverted to other egg farms, egg traders or pulp facilities?

KEY IMPACTS *CONT.*

On-farm eggs sales

The loss of staff due to coronavirus could have a much greater impact than the loss of sales.

To manage this risk:

- Maintain a clear delineation of staff involved in on-farm sales and other activities
- Consider steps to manage biosecurity and hygiene of customers entering the farm
- Consider options for conducting sales off-site
- Consider temporarily cancelling on-farm egg sales

Customers

Maximise the ability of customers to be flexible in response to supply disruption.

- Let customers know the steps taken to prepare
- Keep customers regularly updated on developments



Disclaimer

These Guidelines have been prepared with reference to protocols developed by the Australian Chicken Meat Federation to provide general guidance to egg farming businesses to mitigate the risks posed by coronavirus to their staff, their business and the broader community. It is based on the best available information in a rapidly evolving public health crisis and versions of these Guidelines may become out of date. These Guidelines should be taken as recommendations only and must not be followed if it conflicts with the advice and directions of public health, primary industry and food authorities.

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