



Food Industries Association of Queensland Inc.

# Guidelines for Industry

## CoVID-19 and your Workforce

1 APRIL 2020

## Disclaimer

This document has been developed to provide general guidance to assist food and beverage businesses to plan for and mitigate the risks posed by COVID-19 to their employees, their business and their supply chain. It is not to be used for any other purpose or made available to any other party, except your partners or advisors, without prior written consent from FIAQ.

While care has been taken preparing this Guide it does not constitute as legal advice. In particular, the protocols that are suggested to be followed in the event of a member of your workplace being confirmed positive for COVID-19 are FIAQ recommendations only. They do not constitute official advice. You must heed any advice and directions given by health officials.

Be aware that the situation is changing rapidly, and that these guidelines may need to be revised in the light of developments.

FIAQ would like to acknowledge that this material has been developed based on guidelines provided by Food SA, and Australian Chicken Meat Federation.

These guidelines have been prepared to assist the food and beverage industry prepare for and manage the COVID-19 outbreak.

They are designed as prompts to consider strategies aimed at:

- protecting the health and safety of your employees, their families and broader community
- ensuring the ongoing supply of food and beverages to Australian consumers, thereby supporting food security in this challenging time
- facilitate, as far as possible, business continuity, thereby ensuring:
  - that the supply chain is not jeopardised
  - ongoing job security for your workforce

## KEEP YOUR WORKFORCE REGULARLY INFORMED AND ENGAGED

Brief all employees and contract staff, including cleaning staff, on the risks and other information relevant to CoVID-19 and provide advice as to what they need to do to protect themselves and prevent the spread of CoVID-19. Appoint a CoVID-19 contact person and provide regular updates.

<p><b>About CoVID-19</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. You get CoVID-19 from people, not from food.</li> <li>2. It isn't spread by food either.</li> <li>3. Infection is most likely to be spread by:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• direct close contact with someone who is actively infected</li> <li>• close contact with a person with a confirmed infection who coughs or sneezes</li> <li>• touching objects or surfaces contaminated with mucus/droplets from a cough or sneeze from an infectious person and then touching your mouth or face</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence against CoVID-19.</li> <li>5. Both at home and at work, you should:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wash your hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet</li> <li>• cover your coughs and sneezes (for example, with a clean tissue, or into your elbow), dispose of tissues, and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser after</li> <li>• avoid touching your face, especially your mouth, nose, and eyes</li> </ul> </li> <li>6. All those things that you already routinely practice at work to protect food and beverages from contamination? (such as handwashing practices, gloves, clean laundered protective clothing) Well, they also help to prevent spread of CoVID-19 between workmates!</li> </ol> <p>If you want further information on CoVID-19, call 13HEALTH (13 43 25 85) or the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require interpreting services, call 131 450.</p>
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**This is not a time for panic. Rather this is a time for all of us to do our part to protect ourselves, our families and communities, our work colleagues and their jobs, and access for all Australians to a reliable and safe food supply.**

## RECOMMENDATION TO PREVENT INTRODUCTION AND SPREAD OF COVID-19

### PPE

✓ It is recommended that you do **not** change company practices re the use of dusk / face masks in the plant

- Supplies of masks are likely to be challenged anyway; you do not want to add to this
- Use of masks in areas of the plant where they are not normally seen may cause unnecessary alarm amongst the workforce
- The Australian Department of Health says: *“Masks are not currently recommended for use by healthy members of the public for the prevention of infections like coronavirus”.*

### Minimise the number of close contacts each worker is exposed to

✓ Consider ways of limiting the opportunity for contact between workers on different shifts.

For example:

- No overlapping shifts
  - As far as possible, there should be clear delineation of staff movements before and at the end of shifts
- Increase the (time) separation between shifts
- use the time for cleaning common areas / facilities

✓ Consider other ways of minimising the number of immediate close contacts each employee might be exposed to in the course of their working day.

- Are there ways that contact between different ‘teams’ working on the floor can be minimised? Or intermingling of members from different work groups be reduced?
- Consider redesigning production line design and/or staffing levels in order to enable workers to be at least 1.5 metres apart. If not possible, consider physical barriers.
- Minimise the number and duration face to face meetings.
  - Where possible, stop face-to-face meetings altogether, and any essential meetings should be restricted to 15 minutes.
- Identify staff and roles that may be able to work remotely/from home.
- Encourage employees who work in ‘teams’ that are in close contact with each other, to try and limit the number of different people they work directly next to – for example, by standing next to the same people throughout the shift and from day to day.
- Ask employees to avoid congregating in carparks, or in other areas outside the workplace.

## Facilitate adoption of good hand hygiene practices

✓ Ensure good hand hygiene practices are promoted and facilitated.

- Conduct re-fresher training of staff in effective hand washing technique.
- Provide adequate hand washing amenities (including alcohol-based hand rub) for staff to use in all staff common areas, change facilities and other common staff facilities.
- Provide adequate hand washing amenities (including alcohol-based hand rub) for staff to use at the entry to the plant and on exiting the plant.
- Encourage use of hand disinfection facilities in staff common areas and on entry and exit points to the plant, including by the use of signage / posters.
- If practical, temperature check all staff upon their entry and exit using an appropriate laser thermometer.

## Restrictions on plant access and international and interstate travel

✓ Implement more stringent access requirements for those entering the plant.

- No entry for non-essential visitors.
  - We suggest that this be extended to auditors and customer visits.
  - Communicate with any auditors your intention to extend this to them and ask for their understanding.
- Require confirmation from any essential visitors (including contractors) that they haven't been overseas or interstate in the past 14 days.
- Enforce stand down periods for employees returning from overseas or interstate travel.
  - The Queensland government has imposed a 14 day period of self-isolation at home following international or interstate travel.
- If any of your workforce is travelling from interstate frequently for work, they may be eligible for [exemption](#) and you have to submit a [health plan](#) that complies with requirements set by the Chief Health Officer.
- Consider revoking security passes for those known to have travelled internationally or interstate, until such time as the 14 day stand day period has been effective.
- Consider asking staff to get a doctor's clearance before returning to work.

## Advise staff of their responsibilities if they are, or think they could be, infected

✓ Ensure staff know what the symptoms of CoVID-19 are.

### Symptoms

- Fever
- A cough
- Sore throat
- Unusual/unexplained fatigue
- Unusual/unexplained shortness of breath
- Other symptoms may include a runny nose, chills and body aches

✓ Advise staff of what they need to do if they experience symptoms that may indicate infection.

### Key Messages

- If you are experiencing cold or flu symptoms, you should not come to work.
- If you develop any of the above symptoms, whether at home or at work, you must immediately isolate yourself and seek medical attention:
  - Call your doctor, or 13HEALTH (13 43 25 85)
  - When you make an appointment with your GP, let them know your symptoms so they can prepare appropriate infection control measures.
- Advise your company as soon as possible after you develop symptoms, including when precisely you believe you may have started exhibiting symptoms.
- If you experience these symptoms while at work, please report to your supervisor/manager immediately.
- Do not travel on public transport or attend any public places.
- Advise your company of the outcome of any medical investigation of your condition (for example, the results if any test for CoVID-19). You should do this as soon as possible.
- Don't return to work until your situation has been resolved.
  - Don't come to work while you are waiting for a test result.
  - Provide evidence that you're OK to return to work, before reporting for work.
- Don't come in to work if you are a close contact of someone outside the workplace, who has confirmed CoVID-19.
- Adhere to all instructions given by medical authorities.
- If who have been required to be in home isolation (for example, if you are a close contact of someone with CoVID-19) and have completed your 14 day isolation period without showing signs or symptoms of being unwell, you are permitted to return to your daily activities including going to work.

- If a supervisor/manager identifies an employee that is exhibiting relevant symptoms, they should ask the employee to go home and follow the above guidelines.
- Remember that your employees' medical records are confidential and you must not disclose to co-workers the medical status of any individual.

## Cleaning and disinfection

✓ Ensure cleaning and disinfection practices are optimised and rigorously adhered to.

- Consider stepping up the cleaning program between shifts.
- Consider whether the following [Australian Government guidelines for cleaning](#) add anything to your standard procedures for cleaning and disinfection of the premises.
- Guidelines for cleaning staff can also be found at page 2 of these Australian Government guidelines.
- Increase the cleaning and disinfection of staff common areas (lunch rooms, change areas etc).
  - This could include fogging these areas, and thorough disinfection of surfaces in common areas and shared facilities.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces on the premises (handrails, turnstiles, door handles, biometrics, scanning devices etc) with detergent solution, not just on the plant floor.
- Pay particular attention to cleaning stainless steel and plastic surfaces, as virus can stay viable on these materials for up to 2-3 days.
- Undertake a thorough review of your entire facility to identify areas/surfaces/equipment that may have been inadvertently overlooked in your existing cleaning program, or which perhaps were not so relevant in a food safety context, but becomes so in the context of CoVID-19. Put a treatment program in place to address any deficiencies found.

## Reduce the chances of misdiagnosis

✓ Encourage all your staff to get the seasonal flu vaccination (better still, provide vaccination for them)

- Flu vaccination does not provide protection from CoVID-19, but it will reduce the potential for flu being mistaken for CoVID-19, which could cause undue alarm and disruption in the workplace.

### Key Messages

- All employees are strongly encouraged to get the seasonal flu vaccine.
- Be aware:
  - The flu vaccination does **not** protect you from CoVID-19.
  - However, because the symptoms of seasonal flu and CoVID-19 can look the same, it is important that the possibility of confusion is minimised to reduce alarm and disruption and to also make sure you are protected from seasonal flu itself.



## Protocols in the event of an employee confirmed to be infected with CoVID-19

- ✓ Close contacts of **confirmed** infected employees should be advised to self-isolate immediately.

### What is 'close contact'?

For the purposes of what constitutes 'close contact' in the context of a processing plant, this is anyone who has been within 1.5 metres of the infected employee for a cumulative period of at least 2 hours at any time in the 24 hours prior to that employee first experiencing symptoms.

- Close contact would also include face-to-face contact for a period of 15 minutes. This type of contact is more likely to occur in staff common areas, eg lunchrooms.

- Provide advice as to what self-isolation means, and what they need to do next. The Australian Government has produced a fact-sheet on [managing home isolation](#).

## What do you do if an employee reports sick with CoVID-19 symptoms, but is not yet confirmed to be infected?

- ✓ Be prepared to identify close contacts quickly.

- Pull together records of who the employee had close contact with over the few days prior to developing symptoms.
- Keep good records of who has worked where, when and with whom, so that you can quickly identify who may or may not have had close contact with a potentially infected staff member.
- Implement a system for recording who each employee has had close contact with (as defined above) in the course of each shift.
  - Electronic staffing records, supplemented by records captured by supervisors, may meet these requirements, or
  - Consider supplementary approaches, such as providing employees with a log book, to be completed at home each night, or sheets to be completed at the end of each shift and left on departing the plant, in which they record all personnel who they were in close contact with in the course of their shift.
- Importantly, this should include who they had contact with during breaks or at the beginning and end of the shift.
- Contact 13HEALTH (13 43 25 85) to be advised on the next steps.

## Preparing for return to work



Someone who has completed official quarantine or has been released from isolation does not pose a risk of infection to other people.

- People who have been required to be in home isolation and have completed their 14 day period and are not showing signs or symptoms of being unwell, are permitted to return to their daily activities including going to work.
  - Where staff have been infected with CoVID-19 but have recovered, it will be important to reassure their work colleagues that their reintroduction into the workplace is safe.
  - You should encourage employees to continue good hygiene practices, both in the workplace and at home, to help stay free of illness.
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## CONTINGENCY ARRANGEMENTS

### Suppliers/Services



Consider what supplies and services may be disrupted and options that may minimise disruption to availability

- Consider supplies and availability of PPE, sanitisers, cleaning agents.
  - Investigate potential alternative suppliers.
- Consider supplies and availability of key ingredients, particularly if reliant on suppliers from countries seriously impacted by CoVID-19.
  - Investigate potential alternative suppliers.
- Consider supplies and availability of key packaging, particularly if reliant on suppliers from countries seriously impacted by CoVID-19.
  - Investigate potential alternative suppliers.
- Risk-assess alternative suppliers of ingredients/packaging now for approval as part of your approved supplier program in order to avoid lengthy trial periods for approvals.
- Consider service providers used, such as pest control providers and calibration providers, and limit their exposure to internal staff.
- If you are experiencing supply shortages (ingredients, PPE, cleaning products, packaging etc.), you can fill out a [form here](#) to alert the Queensland government that will provide matching services.

### Diminished workforce



Each company needs to work out its own contingency arrangements for processing in the event of a diminished workforce

- Start planning now for how you will continue to process when your workforce has been significantly reduced through actual infections, or as a consequence of a large number of staff being in isolation due to contact with an infected person.
- Are there alternative processing plants that can be diverted to?
- In the face of a serious shortage of labour, can the available workforce be used differently
  - Consider paring back what you do in the plant to the basics and apply the workforce that you have to a less complex or diverse set of activities. Consider the packaging type that will be used for restricted processing and how this will be applied.
  - Consider reducing the range of products supplied and/or removing the more labour-intensive products.
  - Consider the repercussions on your customers of any such changes in your product range and prepare to help them over it with communication.

## Recruiting and training new staff

### ✓ Consider how you might be able to find and train replacement staff

- There will be people from other sectors who find themselves out of work. Start planning now for how you can recruit them.
- You may need to train larger numbers of staff than would normally be the case.
  - Are there opportunities to speed up and scale up training for new employees in plant roles?
  - Can some of that training be done electronically, for example.
- Consider asking supervisors to give thought to targeting members of their current teams who would be suitable to step up to supervisory roles, if need be.
  - Provide training / mentoring now to facilitate help targeted individuals to step up into these roles.

## Communication with your direct customers

### ✓ It's important to keep your customers up to date on your preparedness and contingency plans

- Let your customers know what you have done by way of preparedness.
- Keep them regularly updated on developments within your company.

## Changed purchasing/dining habits

### ✓ Be mindful of the possibility of consumers changing their purchasing and/or dining habits, including the risks this might pose from a food safety perspective.

- Prepare to help your customers overcome their unfamiliarity with handling and consuming your product in unfamiliar ways.

## SUPPORT YOUR WORKFORCE

- Follow up with affected employees, to ensure they feel supported and have access to relevant information.
- Encourage unaffected employees to provide support to their colleagues that may be in self isolation or recovering from infection.
  - Many people will find self-isolation difficult.
  - Give your colleagues a call to make sure they are coping and feel supported.