****INFORMATION ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC****

****WHAT IS COVID-19?****

Coronavirus Disease 2019, also known as COVID-19, caused by the virus Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) is a “person-to-person” disease as there is no evidence of animal transmission. Currently, there is no evidence that the SARS-CoV-2 infects livestock animals, but with pressure mounting on food and farming industries globally, the people working in these industries must remain safe and healthy so that efficient production and supply can continue.

Therefore, efforts must be directed to the support of farm operations and the overall food production supply chain (e.g., feed distribution, feed mills, slaughter plants, truck drivers, etc.) to achieve food security. Furthermore, to survive this pandemic period, high priority must be placed on the agri-food system and this can be achieved when specific biosecurity measures are taken.

****HOW COVID-19 SPREADS****

When someone who has COVID-19 coughs or exhales, they release droplets of infected fluid. Most of these droplets fall on nearby surfaces and objects - such as desks, tables or telephones. People could catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects – and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. If they are standing within one meter of a person with COVID-19 they can catch it by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by them. In other words, COVID-19 spreads in a similar way to flu. Most persons infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some go on to experience more serious illness and may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness rises with age: people over 40 seem to be more vulnerable than those under 40. People with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease are also more vulnerable to serious illness.

****RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FARM EMPLOYEES****

* Limit farm entrance to essential personnel or personnel performing essential activities. Exceptions to this must be approved by the farms' biosecurity officer and/or upper management. Essential activities are those required for the care and wellbeing of the animals, workers and facilities, and require prompt attention.
* Persons who are sick or have signs of illness (e.g. fever, coughing, sneezing, runny nose, tiredness, shortness of breath) should stay home and call a doctor or healthcare provider.
* Upon entering the farm, immediately wash hands with soap for 20 seconds. Hand sanitizer is recommended if washing with soap is not available.
* Place special care when disinfecting personal objects that need to enter farms (e.g. cell phones, etc.) and all materials entering farms, in particular those handled by farm workers. Follow farm established procedures to disinfect incoming materials. Handle the materials with disposable gloves, if available.
* Avoid close physical contact such as shaking hands or hugging when greeting co-workers.
* Display posters promoting basic preventive measures like hand-washing, disinfection, avoidance of physical contact, etc.
* Limit interactions with people outside of work
* Avoid travel outside work.
* Do not carpool or limit carpooling to essential situations.
* Limit travel to essential locations (i.e. groceries and pharmacies).
* Avoid large crowds (e.g. church, mosque, shopping centers and entertainment events).

****WITHIN-THE-FARM RECOMMENDATIONS****

* In mechanically ventilated buildings or rooms, increase ventilation rates to increase the number of air exchanges of the rooms and hallways (i.e. showers, breakrooms, and bathrooms).
* In naturally ventilated areas, open outside windows (while following biosecurity protocols) to increase air circulation in the area.
* Consider staffing of farms to accommodate different schedules to avoid likelihood of infection of all workers at the same time. For instance, half of the employees work in the morning and half in the afternoon, or half work on Mon-Tu-Sa-Su and the other half on We-Thu-Fri or other schedules that facilitate segregation of personnel, while attending to the needs of the farm.
* Keep workers segregated in designated areas and functions to avoid interactions among them and the potential spread of the virus.
* Stagger arrival of workers to the farm so they do not congregate in the common air spaces (e.g. entry hallways, showers or breakrooms).
* Plan break times so that a maximum of 2 workers are in the same room at the same time while they maintain at least 6 feet distance from each other.
* Avoid having groups of people in the same air space. Limit number of meetings that require face-to-face interactions and consider alternatives such as conference calls or email. When conducting these meetings, limit them to small groups and keep at least 6 feet distance between people.
* Clean showers and break room, and disinfect surfaces regularly.
* Do not share used materials (e.g. towels, kitchen utensils, pens), and wash and dry them between uses.
* Clean and disinfect common spaces frequently after each group of people, and at the end of the day.
* Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, counter-tops, fridge/freezer doors and doorknobs. Use the established procedure used in these surfaces and follow the directions on the label.
* When handling clothing and towels, wear gloves, do not shake the clothes so it minimizes particle dispersion and disinfect clothing hampers.

****WASH HANDS FREQUENTLY****

* Wash hands with soap for 20 seconds prior to eating or entering common area spaces. Hand sanitizer is recommended if washing with soap is not available.
* Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands or gloves.
* If you or a family member test positive, or you suspect that you may have become exposed, let your supervisor know and seek advice on how to proceed. Sub-clinical infections play a role at spreading the virus.

****IF YOU ARE SICK, STAY HOME UNTIL:****

* At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.
* There is improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath).
* At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

****WORKING WITH ANIMALS****

If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and have contact with animals:

* Avoid further contact with them.
* Have another member of your staff care for the animals while informing the management to take the necessary steps of precaution.

****RESOURCES****

[https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

[https://www.pork.org/public-health/what-you-need-to-know-about-covid-19/](https://www.pork.org/public-health/what-you-need-to-know-about-covid-19/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

[https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

[https://www.pig333.com/company\_news/containment-measures-for-coronavirus-covid-19-on-pig-farms\_15954/](https://www.pig333.com/company_news/containment-measures-for-coronavirus-covid-19-on-pig-farms_15954/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)