

Novel Coronavirus Prevention & Control for Farms

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The U.S. is confronting an outbreak of a novel coronavirus that causes serious respiratory disease and may be deadly for older people and those with weakened immune systems. The [World Health Organization](#) is now calling the outbreak a global pandemic because it is affecting countries all over the world. People and organizations can still fight coronavirus



by taking steps to prevent transmission of the disease, the whole point of widespread cancellation of events is to create “social distancing” to lower the infection rate and prevent health care systems from being overwhelmed. New York State Department of Health has a [Coronavirus Website](#) with [English](#) and [Spanish](#) posters for preventing coronavirus infection (<https://health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>).

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and prevention (CDC) provides clear guidance about preventing infection in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#). They also provide a number of [printable factsheets and posters](#) in English and Spanish suitable for use in the workplace. (Download at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/factsheets.html>)

Employer Actions Steps

Your farm workforce is not immune to coronavirus, please begin taking steps to protect yourself and your employees.

1. Talk with your employees about coronavirus, how it spreads, and how to prevent getting infected.
2. Print the [CDC factsheets and posters](#), post in your workplace and employee housing facilities.
3. Provide guidance to help employees clean and disinfect employer-provided housing. Follow up with employees and manage the process to be sure that this happens. Set up a regular weekly and daily schedule for cleaning.

CDC guidance for cleaning homes: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/cleaning-disinfection.html>

4. Clean and disinfect your workplace. The employee breakroom and bathroom are great places for virus to be transmitted. Clean and disinfect any areas where employees congregate or routinely touch items such as doorknobs and computer keyboards. Set up daily and weekly cleaning schedules.
5. Provide cleaning supplies such as cleaning solutions, buckets, mops, brushes, etc for cleaning at work and for those living in employer-provided housing. (CDC list of approved antimicrobial cleaning products: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list_03-03-2020.pdf)
6. Review your sick leave policy. The first advice for people who are sick is to stay home except to get medical care. Do you provide paid sick leave for your employees? If you do not, will employees feel financially obligated to come to work even if they are sick?
7. Communicate with employees that they should stay home if they are sick. Employees sometimes come to work believing they will face punishment or firing if they miss work. Be sure your employees understand that their health and that of their co-workers' comes first. Communicate and make a plan to cover for sick employees. CDC provides posters in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) covering symptoms of novel coronavirus.
8. Prepare your disaster contingency plan. What will you do if 50% of your employees become sick and unable to work? Are there neighboring farms who might be able to share resources in an emergency? Who will manage for a few weeks if you or another key manager are unable to leave your house or are hospitalized?
 - Cornell provides the [Extension Disaster Education Network \(EDEN\)](#) to provide community education resources across the entire disaster cycle of preparedness, response, and recovery.
 - Penn State also provides farm [disaster preparedness resources](#).

At minimum, share the guidelines below from New York state with your employees and family.

New York State Department of Health Prevention Tips

While there is currently no vaccine to prevent this virus, these simple steps can help stop the spread of this and other respiratory viruses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Additional Resources

- [Considerations for Fruit and Vegetable Growers Related to Coronavirus](#) from University of Vermont Extension
- [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#) from CDC
- [Be Prepared: What Should Employers do About the Coronavirus?](#) from National Law Review

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