

**Supporting Dairy Workers:
Housing and Workplace Best Practices
(COVID-19)
2020**

Created by Members of:

WISCONSIN FARMWORKERS COALITION

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1. Purpose: Recommend best practices/guidance on Housing and workplace safety.

Farming is an essential business operation and activity. Wisconsin agricultural workers and operators generate necessary food supplies for the State of Wisconsin and our nation. COVID-19 can spread easily in settings with many people in close proximity including living and workplace facilities for dairy farmworkers. Farm owners, managers, and farm labor contractors who provide employment and housing for workers should proactively implement plans to prevent exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19, care for individuals with COVID-19, and prevent the spread of the disease. Strict compliance to strong sanitary protocols and physical distancing practices will protect the health and safety of farmworkers and decrease operational impacts.

Farmworkers are particularly susceptible to getting and spreading COVID-19 due to workplace and living conditions. Additionally, individuals above the age of 65 and people with pre-existing medical conditions such as diabetes, chronic lung disease and chronic heart disease, or a compromised immune system (e.g., cancer, cancer treatment, or other immunosuppressant treatments) have a greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Agricultural workers with lung problems associated with exposure to common hazards such as pesticides used in agricultural operations, are also at special risk.

If followed, the recommendations from the WI Farmworker Coalition will minimize dairy farmworker exposure to COVID-19 and protect public health of the state.

The key components of a prevention plan for migrant farm workers include:

- 1) Proactively identifying the health risks faced by farmworkers and developing action steps to minimize the risk of exposure and spread of the virus,
- 2) Worker education to ensure understanding of best practices to reduce risk of transmission
- 3) Early detection and isolation of people with symptoms of COVID-19, and
- 4) Caring for individuals with COVID-19 to ensure that they do not spread the illness to others.

1.1 Plan and be Prepared

Develop Plans and Best Practices

- Establish communication with local health departments. Identify who at the local health department will be your primary contact for COVID-19 concerns. Ask what resources your local health department may have available to support isolation and quarantine in the event that you would need additional space for this.
- Develop plan for alternate housing to comply with isolation and quarantine requirements.
- Communicate with your state housing inspector in order to request and arrange for advance inspection of any alternative housing.
- Develop plan to disinfect high-touch areas within the common area and facilities daily per CDC guidance: Plan for cleaning and disinfecting of work areas, common areas, and all bathrooms (workplace and housing).
- Develop plan for a COVID-19 screening process for employees upon arrival to worksite and any employer-provided housing.
- Develop plan to allow employees to isolate in employer-provided housing and recuperate if they have symptoms of COVID-19.
- Communicate an employer's COVID-19 prevention and care plan to workers at time of recruitment or hire, in a way that is readily understandable by all workers.
- Develop workplace plan for increased absenteeism. Disclose contingency plans to workers at the time of recruitment or hire. Workplace contingency plans may include staggering work shifts, cross-training employees or hiring temporary workers.
- Do not dock pay from employees who call-in sick or do not work due to exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms.

Housing workers with symptoms of COVID-19

- Workers exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath) should be provided a separate, isolated living space away from other workers.
- Provide sanitized cloth face coverings free of charge. Store additional sanitized face coverings near the isolation living quarters for people exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. It is especially important that face coverings are worn by workers exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-facecoverings.html>
- Ensure proper ventilation of rooms where persons with COVID-19 are housed.

Accessing healthcare and health departments

- Identify who at the local health department will be your primary contact for COVID-19 concerns. Discuss and establish reporting procedures with local health departments.
- Identify a list of healthcare facilities and healthcare providers near dairy farm and any employer-provided housing. It is important to find out if the local clinic has COVID-19 testing capacity and how patients can access tests (i.e., What is the cost if worker is uninsured, what are the requirements for accessing financial support programs offered through the facility and other options available).
 - To view a list and map of healthcare facilities - Wisconsin Association of Free & Charitable Clinics: <http://www.wafclinics.org/find-a-clinic.html> or WI Community Health Centers: <https://www.wphca.org/page/FindHealthCenter>
 - If you cannot find a free or low-cost facility in your area, contact your local health department for advice <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/lh-depts/counties.htm>
- Communicate with identified healthcare provider(s) and/or facilities in order to identify and resolve any obstacles to worker treatment in advance of need.
- Provide health insurance to your employees and encourage your employees to sign-up for such insurance. Assist workers in applying for BadgerCare Plus medical insurance, if eligible. <https://access.wisconsin.gov/access/> Additional information is also available: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p1/p10179.pdf>
- Offer paid sick time leave so that employees feel empowered to report experiencing COVID 19 symptoms and can seek medical attention. (**Related:** many employers may be subject to the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which requires certain employers to provide 80 hrs of paid sick leave to employees with COVID-19 symptoms)

1.2 Promote Healthy Habits

Communication measures

- Communicate all information in the language a worker understands.
- Inform workers about the steps being taken in the workplace and employer-provided housing to establish social distancing and prevent the spread of the virus.
- Communicate to workers important safety messages and updates daily.
- Seek input from workers regarding additional measures that could be taken to ensure safety in workplace and employer-provided housing.
- Ensure workers will not face retaliation for making suggestions on health and safety or reporting unsafe work or housing conditions. Provide training to supervisors to prevent retaliation.
 - o It is against the law for any employer to take any adverse action such as firing or threatening a worker for exercising safety and health rights such as raising safety and health concerns to their employer, participating in union activities concerning safety and health matters, filing a safety and health complaint or participating in a OSHA investigation. Workers have 30 days from the date of any such discriminatory action by the employer to file their complaint with OSHA.
- Visibly post anti-retaliation protections and phone numbers workers can use call to report retaliation: OSHA https://www.osha.gov/workers/file_complaint.html

Prevention

- Promote preventative actions: use health messaging and materials developed by credible public health services, distributed in a language and format all employees will understand.
- Provide training on handwashing, social distancing, and identifying COVID-19 symptoms.
- Visibly post educational signage to encourage handwashing, social distancing, and awareness of COVID-19 symptoms in workplace and housing.
- Provide prevention supplies free of charge at your workplace and/or housing site: soap or alcohol-based hand sanitizers that contain at least 60% alcohol, tissues, trash baskets and surgical or cloth face coverings. Plan to have extra supplies on hand.
- Promote the use of cloth face coverings in all settings where physical distancing measures are difficult to maintain.
- Consider installing physical barriers between workers to minimize contact for those who must work in close proximity for extended periods of time.

- Develop plan for washing and drying cloth face coverings after each use, per CDC guidelines.
- Increase the number of washers and dryers available in employer-provided housing units, in order to allow the more frequent laundering of cloth face coverings. Do not charge workers to use washers and dryers.
- Ensure supervisors lead by example.

Education: Hygiene & Handwashing

- Conspicuously display [DHS](#) or [CDC](#) hand hygiene signs in English and in the language of workers, if other than English.
- Conspicuously display [DHS](#) or [CDC](#) on protecting oneself and others from COVID- 19 in workplace and employer-provided housing in English and in the language of workers, if other than English.
- Provide information about social distancing in English and in the language of workers, if other than English.
- Employees should avoid sharing personal items with coworkers (i.e., food, dishes, cups, gloves, engaging in activities such as playing cards, etc.)
- Employees should sneeze or cough into tissues (and immediately discard the tissue) or their shoulder or elbows. They should wash their hands afterwards.
- Keep a minimum distance of six (6) feet from other coworkers (or any CDC updated social distancing protocol), including in workplace, during mealtimes, while in transportation provided by the employer, etc.
- Encourage employees to wash/sanitize their hands multiple times daily, including before and after work, breaks, eating, and use of toilet facilities.
- Place hand washing stations or hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol in cooking and eating facilities and in workplaces. Allow workers to use handwashing stations or hand sanitizer as frequently as desired.
 - Follow CDC guidelines for personal hygiene, including using an alcohol-based sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol or washing their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - Have soap and disinfectant, potable water, and single-use disposable towels available at worksites and at employer-provided housing.
- Reduce meetings and group gatherings to essential communication only and limit such meetings. If group meetings must occur, hold outside or in a space where people can observe social distancing of at least six (6) feet.
- Limit personal contact and grouping within employer-provided housing and worksites and limit the number of people using common facilities at any one time.
- The CDC has educational materials available in both English and Spanish: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/factsheets.html>

- The WI Dept of Health Services has information posters in English, Spanish, Hmong & Chinese Mandarin:
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/p-02592.htm> and
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/resources.htm>

Provide supplies

- Provide access to cleaning supplies free of charge and support workers in maintaining a clean and disinfected environment through training, signage, and providing increased time to clean and disinfect work spaces and shared common housing spaces.
- Provide free of charge a disinfectant that is active against coronaviruses.
<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-useagainst-sars-cov-2> Provide training on how to safely use disinfectants.

1.3 Preventing the Spread of COVID-19

Screening procedures for incoming workers

- Employees (including supervisors) that are sick, have symptoms related to COVID-19, or have a family member sick should be required to stay home and recuperate. Provide paid sick time to empower workers to take off time if they are ill. If the Families First Coronavirus Response Act applies to your farm or company, educate workers on their rights to paid sick leave provided by the Act.
- Apply screening procedures prior to employees entering the facility daily: Measure employee's temperature (fever is 100.4 °F [38 °C] or higher) and/or specifically ask if they have experienced a fever, cough or difficulty breathing. For specifics, please refer to CDC guidelines, found here:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html>
- Employees who have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify supervisor, not enter the worksite, and should be isolated from other workers in both the workplace, and in employer-provided housing.
- Ask employees if they have traveled in the last 14 days or been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19. If so, separate them from other workers and support them in isolating at home or in employer-provided housing.

- WI Department of Health link to screening tool:
<https://www.wihealthconnect.com/>
- Employers should not terminate employment of employees who are sick with or have been exposed to COVID-19.

Workers exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19

- People with symptoms of COVID-19 should not be working.
- Workers exhibiting symptoms should be provided a mask and asked to wear it when leaving the workplace to assist with source control. Masks should be provided to any caregivers of ill workers.
- Supervisors should notify management and follow established plan to notify the local health department.
- Arrange for sick workers to see or speak with a medical provider. Assist workers in communicating with the medical provider. Communicate with the medical provider in advance of any worker arriving to medical facility so healthcare workers can take appropriate precautionary measures.
- Employers should ensure that workers exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 are transported separately to their residences and other transportation provided by the employer is also separate from other workers not exhibiting symptoms. Workers with symptoms of COVID-19 should take a private vehicle to get to the medical provider. If they do not have their own vehicle or are too ill to drive, please assist with transportation. Have the patient sit as far away as possible from the driver and both the patient and driver should wear a mask.
- All surfaces the sick worker came in contact with should be cleaned and disinfected.
- Notify all employees when a coworker exhibits symptoms of COVID-19. Disclose to employees when a worker tests positive for COVID-19. Employers do not need to name sick or positive employees, but should alert all workers so that coworkers can take precautionary measures and seek testing.
- Workers at the workplace and employer-provided housing who were in close contact with sick or COVID-19 positive worker should also be considered exposed and should be quarantined for 14 days.
 - WI Dept of Health has guidance for those who have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19:
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/p-02598a.htm>
 - Guidance for those who live with a person who had COVID-19: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/p-02598.htm>
- Sick employees should not return to work until the criteria to discontinue home isolation are met in consultation with healthcare providers and local health departments:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-hospitalized-patients.html>

Non-test-based strategy:

- At least 10 days since symptoms first appeared **and**
- At least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication **and**
- Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving (Loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation.)

Isolation measures

- Workers exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 should be provided a separate, isolated living space, unless the symptomatic worker resides in a one-family housing unit. If an employer providing housing is unable to effectively isolate worker within their current living space, workers with COVID-19 symptoms shall be isolated in a separate room or building from other workers.
- Food and water should be provided to workers under isolation in order to minimize the need to leave isolation. Workers may not have any funds to buy their own food and may not have access to kitchens to prepare their own food while sick.
 - Resources: Contact local food pantry to inquire about deliveries of emergency food supplies.
- A worker exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 should be immediately be assigned to a separate toilet room, if possible, or a separate toilet if a separate toilet room is not available.
- Provide paid sick time to empower workers to take off time if they are ill. If the Families First Coronavirus Response Act applies to your farm or company, educate workers on their rights to paid sick leave provided by the Act.
- Monitor worker for worsening symptoms, as people who develop symptoms may become sicker and require hospitalization. Assign a designated caregiver for each sick worker who will be on call and easily contactable. Provide workers with phone number(s) for the emergency contact person on call to assist them if symptoms worsen.
- Remain in communication with local public health officials. Public health officials may provide further instructions about isolation and release from isolation.
- Create a plan for how to care for workers, especially if many workers are sick at the same time. Also develop workplace contingency plans for periods of reduced labor.
- Review CDC Guidance for [Agricultural Employers](#), [Homeless Shelters](#) and/or [Universities](#) for guidance on preventing/managing an outbreak in congregate living settings.

Handling a COVID-19 positive diagnosis:

- Notify your local health department. <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/lh-depts/contacts/local-healthdepartment-listing.pdf>
- Instruct workers who had contact with the COVID-19 positive person to self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days. These exposed workers should be separated from non-exposed workers for 14 days (e.g., sleep in a separate room, work in a separate area). If they develop symptoms of COVID-19, follow your established procedure for isolation and care. Guidelines on what to do if someone has been in close contact with a COVID-19 positive person are available from WI Dept of Health Services
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/p02598a.htm>
 - Information on what to do if you live with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 are available from WI Dept of Health Services
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/p-02598.htm>
- Provide separate sleeping quarters and bathroom for each individual with COVID-19. Clean and disinfect sleeping quarters and bathroom daily. Consider establishing designated times for showering for persons in isolation and establish a disinfection protocol to avoid exposure risk.
- If an individual sharing a bathroom becomes symptomatic of COVID-19, all others sharing a bathroom should be considered exposed.
- Cleaning and disinfecting supplies should be provided free of charge.
- Food and water should be provided to workers under isolation. Also plan to provide worker with any necessary medication.
- Do laundry for sick employee.
- Employers should not terminate employment of workers who are sick with or have been exposed to COVID-19.
- Develop plan for contacting the employee's family and identify a method to stay in contact with them virtually.

Employer-Provided Housing:

- Separate beds by at least six (6) feet apart to comply with the social distancing. Workers should also sleep head to toe.
- Sleeping and living areas should have proper ventilation. ASHRAE standards and recommendations for living quarters can be found here:
<https://www.ashrae.org/File%20Library/Technical%20Resources/COVID-19/ASHRAE-Residential-C19-Guidance.pdf>

- Immediately separate any individuals with symptoms of COVID-19. Individuals with COVID-19 symptoms should be isolated and have their meals brought to them to eat separately in their isolation quarters.
- Increase number of meal shifts to decrease number of people eating in same space at one time. Clean and disinfect dining space after each meal shift.
- Be diligent in following hygiene and food safety rules about keeping food covered and not sharing utensils or containers, washing hands before eating and handling shared object and cleaning kitchen and dining areas between use.
- Encourage employees to follow social distancing practices in common areas.

Employer-Provided Transportation:

- Employers should ensure that workers engage in social distancing on all transportation between work and their residences and other transportation provided by the employer. Workers should sit six (6) feet apart, even if this requires additional transport or reduces productivity. Employer may stagger start times or workdays.
- If the employer is unable to meet the six-foot distancing on transportation, it should provide sanitized face masks or cloth face coverings and require all vehicle occupants to wear face masks or cloth face coverings during transport.
- Hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol should be available in all transport vehicles.
- All high touch surfaces in vehicles should be cleaned and disinfected at least once per day.
- Reduce the number of workers transported at a time

Cleaning & Disinfecting:

- Train workers on the difference between cleaning and disinfecting.
- Train workers to safely use chemical disinfectants.
- Increase the frequency of your routine cleaning and disinfection program
- Emphasize the importance of cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces: bathrooms, water coolers, faucet handles, door knobs, light switches, countertops, equipment, phones, etc.
- Use Environment Protection Agency (EPA) registered disinfectant to clean and disinfect. <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

2. Resources

- State of WI: COVID-19 Home: <https://govstatus.egov.com/wi-covid-19>
- Agriculture Workers and Employers - Interim Guidance from CDC and the U.S. Department of Labor <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-agricultural-workers.html#>
- CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>
- CDC Resources for Businesses and Employers- Plan, prepare & respond to coronavirus disease 2019: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>
- CDC Cleaning & Disinfection for Community Facilities: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>
- CDC Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home (English & Spanish): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html>
- CDC Poster/Print Resources: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/communication/factsheets.html>
- CDC Discontinuation of Isolation for Persons with COVID-19 Not in Healthcare Settings: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>
- CDC Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May have had Exposure to a Person with suspected or Confirmed COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/community/critical-workers/implementing-safety-practices.html>
- CDC Resources to support homeless shelters: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/index.html>
- WI Dept of Public Health Coronavirus Website: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/index.htm> □ Wisconsin Health Connect on behalf of Dept of Health Services - Screening for COVID-19: <https://www.wihealthconnect.com/>
- WI Dept of Health Services (DHS) What should I do if someone in my home is sick from COVID-19: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/p-02598.htm>
- WI Dept of Health Services (DHS) What should I do if I had close contact with someone who has COVID-19: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/p-02598a.htm>
- WI Dept of Health Services (DHS) COVID-19 Posters in English, Spanish, Hmong and Chinese Mandarin: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/p-02592.htm>
- FDA COVID-19 Resources: <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>
- Migrant Clinicians Network – Farmworkers and COVID-19 FAW (English & Spanish): <https://www.migrantclinician.org/blog/2020/mar/farmworkers-and-covid-19-faq.html>
- National Center for Farmworker Health – Resources on COVID-19: <http://www.ncfh.org/covid-19.html>
- Western Center for Agricultural Health & Safety: <https://aghealth.ucdavis.edu/covid19#resources>

- USDA: US Dept of Agriculture: COVID-19 Federal Rural Resource Guide:
https://rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/USDA_COVID-19_Fed_Rural_Resource_Guide.pdf
- Oregon – COVID-19 Guidance for Shelter Settings (appropriate for congregate living/barracks):
<https://multco.us/novel-coronavirus-covid-19/covid-19-guidance-shelter-settings>
- WA State Dept of Health: Workplace and Employer Resources & Recommendations:
<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Coronavirus/Workplace>
- EPA List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2:
<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/listn-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
- NC DHS COVID-19 Videos in English & Spanish:
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUadR7S9ykdIO5IWNW3yCJ8IBUGZ3c6gY>
- CA OSHA COVID-19 Infection Prevention for Agricultural Employers and Employees:
<https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Infection-Prevention-in-Agriculture.pdf>
- DWD Employment & Training COVID-19 and Job Center Services:
<https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/covid19/public/det.htm>
- Iowa State Extension: Five Steps to Formulate Workforce Contingency Plans in COVID-19 Setting: <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/pdf/c1-84.pdf>
- Hierarchy of Controls in a Pandemic: <https://www.assp.org/news-and-articles/2020/03/31/how-to-apply-the-hierarchy-of-controls-in-a-pandemic>

Contact Information:

Department of Workforce Development – Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Services (MSFW):

Migrant inspector (State of WI - Migrant Labor Law: Migrant housing, field sanitation standards, work agreements)

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