



CANADIAN MEAT COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES VIANDES DU CANADA

SAFEGUARDING the Canadian Meat Supply

Recommended best practices for the Canadian
meat industry to protect against Covid-19





There is currently no evidence to suggest that this virus is circulating in animals in Canada. Imports and exports of plants and animals to and from Canada are not currently affected. As always, producers should follow normal biosecurity measures by continuing to consider the potential risks associated with various people entering their business premises and implement measures to manage these visits.

See list of references: 5, 6, 11

There is currently no evidence that food is a likely source or route of transmission of COVID-19. Unlike foodborne gastrointestinal viruses like norovirus and hepatitis A that often make people ill through contaminated food, SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, is a virus that causes respiratory illness. Foodborne exposure to this virus is not known to be a route of transmission.

See list of references: 8, 3, 1

The World Health Organization has issued precautionary recommendations including advice on the need to continue to follow good hygiene practices during food handling and preparation, such as washing hands, cooking meat thoroughly and avoiding potential cross-contamination between cooked and uncooked foods.

See list of references: 9, 12, 13, 14

This guidance document is intended to provide some background to establishments as they develop their own plans, standard operational procedures and resources for dealing with COVID-19 and its impact on their workforce and operations. This document has embedded the responses to many questions posed by CMC members.

The contents have been drawn from a wide range of sources, advice from industry experts, industry protocols in a very short period of time, so it is expected that this document may be updated as information will be available. Measures may vary between companies and will continue to be adapted as required.

Content:

1. Recommended Best Practices for Health & Safety of personnel working in meat facilities (employees, inspectors, contractors)
2. Guidance to Meat Slaughter and Processing Establishments on Prevention and Response to Suspect and Confirmed COVID-19 Plant Employees
3. COVID-19 Contingency Planning - Meat and Poultry slaughter



The Canadian Meat Council acknowledges the contributions provided by meat and poultry companies at this critical time. Especially to Paul Savage / Sylvain Fournaise (OLYMEL), Sharon Mohammed (Maple Leaf Foods), André Côté (Sani Marc), Peter Stein (Food Safety Solutions), Julie Powell (Sofina), Michael Mensah-Wilson (Donald's Fine Foods) and Mark Klassen (Canada Beef/CCA).

1. Recommended Best Practices

for Health & Safety of personnel working in meat facilities (employees, inspectors, contractors)

The health and safety of all personnel and inspectors is the top priority for all establishments.



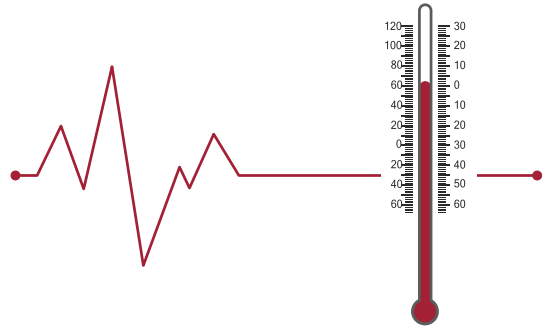
1.1. Controlled Entry

- ✓ Visitors are no longer permitted unless special permission is given by senior management. Visitors who have traveled outside of Canada must not be allowed into the establishments. Establishment include office area, welfare areas, locker rooms, cafeterias, washrooms, transitions rooms, slaughter and processing rooms.
- ✓ Consider scheduling meetings with essential visitors outside the facility.
- ✓ All entries at facilities is strongly recommended to have a full-time employee or, ideally, via electronic technology (e.g.: for full-time employees) to ensure that the access of every external individual has been registered and followed company's control procedures.
- ✓ The date and name of any individual entering the facility must be recorded.
- ✓ All delivery personnel are subject to the same sanitary procedures and symptom monitoring as meat and poultry processing establishment employees/inspectors/contractors.
- ✓ Limiting inter-facility travel as much as possible is strongly recommended.

1.2. Travel and Exposure History

- ✓ Self-isolation for 14 days is required for employees/inspectors/contractors that travelled outside of Canada or have come into close contact with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19 related illness (probable or confirmed case). [Procedure for self-monitoring, self-isolation, and isolation for COVID-19.](#)





1.3. Symptom Monitoring

- ✓ All employees/inspectors/contractors must be advised to monitor themselves ([Health Canada's self-assessment tool](#)) and be instructed not to come to work if they have symptoms of COVID-19 related illness. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever (over 38 degrees Celsius), tiredness, and dry cough. [Further information about COVID-19 and symptomatology from World Health Organization.](#)
- ✓ If symptoms are observed at work, the employees/inspectors/contractors must inform their supervisor and be instructed to go home immediately and follow the guidance provided by their local health authority for assessment and testing. [Public Health information for all provinces and territories](#) and [isolation for COVID-19.](#)
- ✓ If employees/inspectors/contractors are diagnosed with COVID-19 related illness by the local health authorities, the employees/inspectors/contractors must advise the facility as soon as possible and an investigation will be initiated as suggested by the [CFIA Guidance to Meat Slaughter and Processing Establishments on Prevention and Response to Suspect and Confirmed COVID-19 Plant Employees.](#)

1.4. Temperature Monitoring

- ✓ If possible, employees/inspectors/contractors have their temperatures taken each morning before work. It is understood that measuring temperature will not capture asymptomatic COVID-19 positives. The company should consider the employee/inspector/contractor privacy by taking the temperature in a designated private area as well as the allowance or not to enter the facilities for those individuals that refuse to be taken their temperature.
- ✓ If a fever (equal to and above 38 degrees Celsius) is detected, the employee is not permitted to work and recommended to seek medical advice. If a non-contact thermometer reveals a suspicious measurement, it is recommended to be confirmed by an ear or under arm medical thermometer with adequate protection equipment to avoid potential contamination with the individual. Temperature taken must be available to individuals that have reason to believe they may have developed a fever throughout the day.
- ✓ An Employee Information Sheet must be prepared for those employees presenting fever reads equal or above 38 degrees Celsius explaining next steps to reduce exposure to the virus, protect their health and public health resources available.
- ✓ Temperature can be measured in the skin (requires an acclimation period) or using an infrared thermometer (non-contact quick measure of body temperature). Some infrared thermometers as per Health and Safety personnel are not suitable for monitoring humans, but can be used as a trigger for a nurse to confirm the individual's temperature with medical thermometer plus additional questions on health status.



- ✓ This is only a source for thermometers for your information (other are available in the market): REED Instruments has infrared thermometers in stock. The company recommended the [R2310 Infrared Thermometer](#) as it is a hand-held one and requires the subject to be within 6 feet (2 m) to take a reading. [Canadian Distributors by Province](#).
- ✓ There are other more sophisticated infrared temperature monitoring for people entering a designated area or including outdoor booth, for example, [this manufacturer](#). It is recommended to contact the company as the product cannot be found easily on the website.
- ✓ The employee/inspector/contractor may require a company's medical release before returning to work.



1.5. Hand washing

- ✓ Employees/inspectors/contractors are required to wash hands thoroughly on both sides including the wrist with soap and water for at least 20 seconds prior to entering production areas, handling meat, after washroom breaks, as often as needed ([video example](#)). It is recommended an immediate drying of the hands with disposable paper towels to effectively reduce the transfer of pathogens from the surface of the hands to the surfaces subsequently touched. Do not use ultra-rapid forced-air dryers or any type of air dry hand dryers as if hands are not washed properly, the virus can be blown throughout the washroom.
- ✓ Hand-washing must be strictly monitored as per the HACCP requirement and food safety program.
- ✓ Hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol may also be used, but are not intended to replace hand-washing in meat and poultry production. Instead, hand sanitizers may be used in addition to or in combination with proper hand-washing. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers may be used if plain soap and water are not available. This is the [list of antiseptic skin cleansers or hand sanitizers](#) meeting Health Canada's requirements.
- ✓ It should be considered that once employees leave lockers area should spray hand sanitizer in their hands to proceed to dressing rooms.



1.6. Personal protection equipment – use of face masks

- ✓ The most effective ways to protect the personnel against COVID-19 are clean frequently hands, cover cough with the bend of elbow or tissue and maintain an appropriate distance from each other ([Helpful WHO video](#)). Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
- ✓ For a healthy person, it is not necessary to wear a mask. There is a worldwide shortage of masks, so WHO urges people to use masks wisely.
- ✓ Masks must be worn by those coughing or sneezing. Disposable face mask can only be used only once. If an employee/inspector/contractor needs to wear a mask, then it is necessary to know how to use it and dispose of it. Please follow the WHO recommendations on how to wear medical masks to protect against COVID-19:
 - Before putting on a mask, clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.
 - Cover mouth and nose with a mask and make sure there are no gaps between your face and the mask.
 - Avoid touching the mask while using it; if you do, clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.
 - Replace the mask with a new one as soon as it is damp and do not re-use single-use masks.
 - To remove the mask: remove it from behind (do not touch the front of the mask); discard immediately in a closed bin; clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.

1.7. Social Distancing

- ✓ Personnel supporting work-from-home when possible is necessary and appropriate.
- ✓ To prevent spread of COVID-19, it is recommended that individuals employ social distancing or maintain approximately 6 feet (2 m) from others, when possible. However, social distancing to the full 6 feet (2 m) will not be possible in some meat and poultry facilities. The risk of an employee transmitting COVID-19 to another is dependent on distance between employees, the duration of the exposure, and the effectiveness of employee hygiene practices and sanitation. When it is impractical for employees in these settings to maintain social distancing, effective hygiene practices should be maintained to reduce the chance of spreading the virus. Meat and poultry facilities should be vigilant in their hygiene practices, including more frequent and proper hand-washing and routine cleaning of all surfaces.
- ✓ All efforts must be taken to improve social distancing to provide maximal spacing between individuals in lunch & break areas by reorganizing tables and chairs, using other available rooms or even renting mobile trailers to add lunch & break areas. As much as possible, considerations on limiting the number of employees going into the locker areas should be taken. Bathroom breaks should be monitored by dedicated employees controlling the number of people in the bathroom area.
- ✓ If employees do not have the ability to maintain the physical distance recommended by PHAC in specific areas of the plant, mitigation measures are included in the annex of the [CFIA Guidance to Meat Slaughter and Processing Establishments on Prevention and Response to Suspect and Confirmed COVID-19 Plant Employees](#).



1.8. Facility and Equipment Cleaning/ Sanitation

- ✓ Federal licenced establishments are required to have Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures developed and implemented to prevent direct contamination or adulteration of product. The same sanitary procedures that establishments are already following to protect food safety will also help prevent the spread of a potential contamination of COVID-19.
- ✓ The facility, equipment, personal protective equipment, tools, etc. continue to be cleaned and sanitized daily. Current practices are sufficient for the control of pathogens. Companies cleaning and sanitation' preventive control plan are required to maintain clean and sanitized facilities and food contact surfaces.
- ✓ The frequency of cleaning and sanitation of offices and common areas (e.g.: hallways, lunchrooms, washrooms, change rooms, doors, etc.) must be increased during the day and at end of shifts. This extra cleaning and sanitation must be executed by dedicated employees. An enhanced focus must be given to all contact surfaces such as tabletops, chair arms, vending machines, refrigerator doors, doorknobs, paper dispensers, microwaves, lockers and handles, toilets, buttons, among other. For lunchrooms, it is recommended to sanitize contact surfaces before and after each break. Companies must provide access to disinfectant to employees/ inspectors/contractors in lunchrooms so they can use it when they feel is necessary.

- ✓ If COVID-19 is present on surfaces, it can be destroyed using industry standard chemicals as well as heat or UV light. Health Canada is [updating continuously the list of hard-surface disinfectants](#) for use against coronavirus (COVID-19). This list is updated as Canadian or foreign product manufacturers have requested to be on the list. The [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has also published a list](#) of disinfectants that have qualified under its emerging viral pathogen program for use against COVID-19. In both lists, there are products to be used on different places (home, hospitals, etc.), not only in food processing. In Canadian legislation, there is no provision to register sanitizers to be used in food processing, so it is possible that products you are using currently are not listed in any of those lists. Likewise, there are no currently regulatory directives that suggest or recommend the use of specific surface disinfectant product in food plants. The recommended practice is that meat and poultry companies must contact their current surface contact sanitizer supplier to find out if the product is deemed effective against COVID-19. At that moment, the manufacturer's letter of guarantee will be considered sufficient to ensure the product is controlling potential contamination.

1.9 Communication of control procedure and action plan to personnel

- ✓ Continuous communication means (letters, apps, brochures, signs, notice boards) must be offered to employees/inspectors/contractors or external individuals dealing with establishments to inform the controls/ procedures/updates to operate meat and poultry plants under the current COVID-19 outbreak.





2. CFIA Guidance

to Meat Slaughter and Processing Establishments on Prevention and Response to Suspect and Confirmed COVID-19 Plant Employees

In order to protect the health and safety of its employees, the CFIA expects that each establishment operator abide by [the advice and guidance provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada \(PHAC\)](#) as well as by local Public Health Authorities in addressing the COVID-19 outbreak. This general public health guidance should be tailored to the specific needs and realities of individual establishments/operations, documented and thoroughly implemented.

- ✓ Establishments are required to have COVID-19 prevention documentation which clearly articulates mitigation measures intended to address exposure risks. It is recognized that certain public health measures may not be possible in plant operations; documentation should recognize this and outline the mitigation measures that are in place.
- ✓ Establishments are also required to have documentation that outlines its response to a suspect and confirmed case of COVID-19.

The guidance on the mitigation and response planning documents and the procedures for operators are found on the [CFIA Guidance to Meat Slaughter and Processing Establishments on Prevention and Response to Suspect and Confirmed COVID-19 Plant Employees](#).





3. COVID-19 Contingency Planning

Meat and Poultry slaughter

The contingency plans will have supply chain implications. The workforce, as much as possible, must be trained for additional positions so they are polyvalent and can fill different positions.

- ✓ In the event of a primary processing plant being unable to operate and/or operate at reduced capacity, the priority will be given to slaughter operations.
- ✓ The company will evaluate the different SKUs and prioritize them to balance production and operation capabilities.
- ✓ Loading animals and catching of birds should be scheduled to reduce the risk of having animals on trucks and not being able to process them.
- ✓ Inform CFIA as early as possible if extended processing hours are required because of reduced number of employees. CFIA in the regions have provided instructions to establishments to request for services outside of the Work Shift Agreements.
- ✓ If a slaughter plant is not able to operate, the company will work with other slaughter operations in the province/region to redirect the livestock and birds.
- ✓ Companies/CMC/ will keep producer's associations informed as needed.





List of References:

1. [CFIA: Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): CFIA information for industry. Reviewed on March 31, 2020.](#)
2. [CFIA Guidance to Meat Slaughter and Processing Establishments on Prevention and Response to Suspect and Confirmed COVID-19 Plant Employees. Reviewed on March 31, 2020.](#)
3. [EFSA: Coronavirus: no evidence that food is a source or transmission route. Reviewed on March 31, 2020.](#)
4. [Health Canada: List of hand sanitizers authorized by Health Canada. Reviewed on March 31, 2020.](#)
5. [National Biosecurity Standards and Biosecurity Principles. Reviewed on March 31, 2020.](#)
6. [National Farm-Level Biosecurity Planning Guide. Reviewed on March 31, 2020.](#)
Additional information is available from the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) (questions and answers on COVID-19).
7. [PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA: Coronavirus disease](#)
8. [US FDA: Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\). Reviewed on March 31, 2020.](#)
9. [US Federal Food Safety Information: 4 Steps to Food Safety.](#)
10. [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: list of disinfectants that have qualified under its emerging viral pathogen program for use against COVID-19. Reviewed on March 31, 2020.](#)
11. [World Organization for Animal Health \(OIE\) \(questions and answers on COVID-19\). Reviewed on March 31, 2020.](#)
12. [WHO: Questions and Answers on the 2019 Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\). Reviewed on March 31, 2020.](#)
13. [WHO – 1: Q&A on coronaviruses \(COVID-19\). Reviewed on March 31, 2020.](#)
14. [WHO – 2: Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) advice for the public: When and how to use masks. Reviewed on March 31, 2020.](#)