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EXTENSION

COVID-19 GUIDANCE and FACT SHEET for POULTRY BIOSECURITY

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The practices and protocols below are to address poultry biosecurity and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. These recommendations are in addition to guidance provided by the [CDC](#), [USDA](#), and other federal agencies as noted at the conclusion of this guidance.

Per Governor Lamont's [Executive Order 7H](#) and [DECD's guidance on essential services](#), food and agriculture are 'essential business.' This includes poultry and egg production.

COVID-19 has caused poultry producers, along with other segments of Connecticut agriculture, to reassess their systems and operational practices in order to make adjustments necessary to protect public health and product safety. As the poultry industry navigates this new territory the Connecticut Department of Agriculture is reaching out to our federal and state partners to determine problem solving methods, capabilities, and preparedness techniques.

Farm contingency planning is an important task in the face of a pandemic such as COVID-19. Plan for disruptions in labor, management, and supply chains (both in deliveries and in product sales). Also, as consumers suddenly focus on diseases, they may doubt the safety of your farm's products and be concerned that diseases that affect animals might affect them. A [workbook](#) is available to download to help you evaluate these topics.

In preparing to interact with consumers and farm workers, it is important to keep in mind that there is a difference between the coronavirus that poultry may carry and the coronavirus causing COVID-19. Most importantly, **the coronavirus that affects poultry does not affect humans.**

- Coronaviruses (CoVs) are a large group of viruses which continuously circulate in mammals and birds. The major CoVs in poultry, infectious bronchitis viruses (IBVs) and turkey coronaviruses (TCoVs), belong to the genus gammacoronavirus which are different from beta-CoVs that infect humans, including the current COVID-19.
- There is no evidence of transmission of poultry coronaviruses to humans or other mammals
- **There is no evidence of human coronavirus transmission to poultry.**

Vigilance in product safety, worker cleanliness, and cleaning and disinfection of production, packaging, and on-farm processing areas is paramount. COVID-19 has directly affected the industry's ability to source inputs, engage workers, and operate their businesses in a normal fashion. Biosecurity is the most important line of defense that each breeder, hatchery, and poultry owner have against diseases.

In order to provide a safe, reliable, and nutritious food source everyone must be committed to adhering to health and safety standards identified by the [CDC](#) and this guidance.

- Wash hands regularly, at least 20 second each time, multiple times throughout the day.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover mouth with a bent elbow when sneezing or coughing. If a tissue is used, dispose of it immediately, and follow with proper handwashing.
- Maintain the recommended social distancing protocols of at least six (6) feet of separation between individuals.
- Limit access to and disinfect common areas regularly.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Wear a cloth face covering/mask when in public.

Limit Access to All Production and Food Processing Areas:

- Only those who are necessary to meet the essential maintenance and operation of a production and processing area should be entering/exiting.
- Production and processing areas should not be open to the public.
- No animals/pets should be allowed in the production area.
- If an employee has a sick person at home or has been in contact with someone who has either tested positive for COVID-19 or has symptoms of COVID-19, they should follow the CDC's guidance on [Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#).
- Employees who have been diagnosed with COVID-19, or believe they have been exposed to COVID-19, should inform management.
- Post signage regarding social distancing, frequent hand washing, not touching your face, (this includes the application of lotions and lip balm) etc., should be posted at all sites. [Post CDC's posters available in English and Spanish](#).
- Post signage stating the following: "Food cannot be consumed at the production or processing area."
- Follow all general poultry [biosecurity guidelines](#) from USDA-APHIS.

Current Information re: COVID-19 and Poultry:

- There is no evidence that COVID-19 can affect poultry including eggs, and chicken and turkey meat. These products are safe for human consumption. Always follow good hygiene practices (i.e., wash hands and surfaces often, separate raw meat from other foods, cook to the right temperature, and refrigerate foods promptly) when handling or preparing foods. Source: [FDA](#)
- Coronaviruses are known to be inactivated by heat and drying and are sensitive to alcohol-based sanitizers and detergents. Source: [Kampf et al., 2020](#); [ANSES Report](#)

- Cleaning and disinfection of poultry equipment and processing unit with [EPA recommended disinfectants for use against COVID-19](#) will help mitigate the virus in addition to maintaining proper food safety in the operation.
- Human-to-human contact is the main route of COVID-19 transmission. Source: [CDC](#)
- Animal Health/Poultry: The United States Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will continue to carry out on-the-ground eradication and management activities where they have active pest and disease programs.
- APHIS will continue to complete required paperwork to support the import and export of live animals and plants and animal products. To support social distancing APHIS will process these documents electronically.

The [USDA Shell Egg Program](#) is implementing some changes to help with logistics of product flow during this time. These include:

- USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is immediately waiving the provision which prohibits official grading for eggs over 21 days in age or which have previously shipped for sale (7 CFR 70.3).
- In addition, a temporary extension of the age restriction for eggs bearing the USDA grade shield from no more than 21 days to 30 days including the date of lay.
- AMS continues to provide critical inspections and grading services.

CDC animal care guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/animals.html>

USDA APHIS poultry biosecurity guidance:

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/defend-the-flock-program/df-biosecurity>

FDA food safety information: <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

For additional guidance for the agricultural industry, please visit the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's page, [Resources for Farmers During COVID-19](#).

If you have a farmers' market or farm stand *currently open* and you'd like to be listed on [CTGrownMap.com](#), please complete this [online form](#).

For ideas and additional outreach on social media platforms that encourage Connecticut residents to [#StayHomeBuyCTGrown](#), take a look at the [Social Media Toolkit](#) on the agency website.

Please reach out to AGR.Covid19@ct.gov with any COVID-19 related questions or concerns you may have. The Connecticut Department of Agriculture is actively working to support our industry and will continue to provide the most up-to-date information as it becomes available.