

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Fact Sheet & Workplace Guidelines

What is COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause respiratory infections. These can range from the common cold to more serious diseases. It was first reported in December 2019 in Wuhan City in China. Coronavirus causes the disease COVID-19. It is a respiratory disease believed to spread through droplets from coughing and sneezing and does so easily. It may also be possible to become infected by touching a contaminated surface or object and then touching your nose or mouth.

General Information for Berry Growers

Coronavirus is expected to be in Australia for at least the next 10 months. It has been estimated that between 20-50% of the workforce will be affected at any given time, particularly heading into winter.

It can be spread in the following ways:

- Mainly from person-to-person
- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 1.5 metres)
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes

There are differing reports as to how long it can remain on surfaces so regular use of disinfectant is critical (depending on the surface and environmental conditions).

According to Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), Novel Coronavirus and Food Safety [webpage](#) the current advice from FSANZ is: **Transmission through food is unlikely** and there is no evidence of this occurring with novel coronavirus to date, however investigations to identify the source of the outbreak, the extent of spread of the infection, and mode(s) of transmission are continuing.

80% of people who will get it will have mild symptoms including fever, cough, shortness of breath and a sore throat. More severe symptoms include pneumonia and severe acute respiratory distress.

Planning

While we are aware that the situation is changing daily, conversations with the retailers confirm the need to:

- Contact your suppliers and identify any potential risks
- Develop a plan to reduce the risk of infection and contingency plans for an on-site infection and supply chain impacts such as labour shortages
- Communicate to your customers.

Infection prevention and control

- Handwashing: essential after coughing, sneezing, eating, toilet use, before handling fresh produce and after smoking
- Preferred method is wash hands with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds. Alternatively use hand sanitiser
- Cover sneezes with tissues and place into bin
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth
- Maintain social distance of at least 1.5 metres
- Check the travel history of staff, especially concentrating on the last three months
- Check staff home hygiene practices and whether they have come into contact with family or friends that have recently travelled or are sharing accommodation with recent travelers
- Sneeze and cough into elbows rather than hands
- Manage picking so fruit and packaging is touched as little as possible

Contractor and employee accountability – both have a Duty of Care

- Ensure due diligence is conducted on all staff travel history (particularly for the last 3 months) and obtain information on their most recent workplaces. Require all workers to sign a permission form to allow fever testing
- Ensure compliance with the 14-day exclusion policy if they are from a high-risk country .
Go to www.health.gov.au/covid19-travellers for the list of at-risk countries.

Be aware of your obligations

As per the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, all businesses have a duty of care to ensure as far as it reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers. This is also a responsibility of each worker to ensure both their own and other workers health and safety at the workplace.

It is important for all businesses to review current and possible risks within the workplace, putting in place contingency plans and addressing them via a policy. This protects you and your workers. Refer to the FWO website:

www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/website-news/coronavirus-and-australian-workplace-laws

Tips on managing employees and visitors

- Limit cross contamination by:
 - Cleaning all tools daily with disinfectant (e.g. diluted bleach, or 70% ethanol solution)
 - Provide individual pickers with their own equipment including designated picking trolleys or packing benches
 - Implement set teams of workers and keep them apart at all times including breaks, transportation and living environments. If possible, provide separate toilet facilities or set times for using facilities followed by disinfection.
 - Cancelling face to face meetings
 - Implementing a “no visitor” policy.
- Ensure accommodation meets basic standards
- Where possible base accommodation and housing around teams so that if an infected case is identified it is easier to isolate the impacts
- Ensure the houses are equipped with appropriate hygiene requirements including soap, hand sanitizer and posters promoting personal hygiene
- Communicate with staff the need for high levels of personal hygiene on and off the farm

Emergency management - what to do if you identify a person with infection

- Identify the source and quarantine all the people (whole team) that have been near the source
- Inform Berries Australia via 1300 201 713 or email rachelmackenzie@berries.net.au. We will send out alerts to everyone on our mailing list including labour hire to minimise movement of quarantined workers between farms
- Immediately disinfect all equipment that the entire team was using including any shared facilities such as lunchrooms & toilets
- Obtain as many details about the original source person as possible to provide to health authorities with traceability including housing arrangements, travel, shopping, networks and Church
- Inform your customers

Industry Impact

Berries Australia is working with other industry associations, retailers and all levels of government to mitigate the impact on industry. We are aware that there are significant concerns around access to labour and inputs such as fertiliser. We will also be looking at ways to encourage ongoing consumption of berries.

We will keep you informed of our progress and please email rachelmackenzie@berries.net.au if you are experiencing specific issues as we will feed that into government processes. We will be clarifying in the next few days the specific measures for horticulture and will send a weekly update.