Practical biosecurity recommendations to prevent COVID-19 in farm workers and allied industry

Swine Disease Eradication Center
University of Minnesota
COVID-19 is a person-to-person transmitted disease

Direct contact with infected persons
Aerosols and contaminated surfaces
Farm access

• If sick, stay home (even if mild symptoms)
• Limit farm access to essential personnel or personnel performing essential activities
• Stagger arrival of workers to the farm so they do not congregate in the common air spaces (e.g., entry hallways, showers or breakrooms)
• Consider staffing of farms to accommodate different schedules to avoid likelihood of infection of all workers at the same time
• Avoid close physical contact such as shaking hands when greeting co-workers
Introduction of materials

• Place special care when disinfecting personal objects that need to enter farms (e.g. cell phones, lunch boxes) and all materials handled by farm workers.

• Follow farm established procedures to disinfect incoming materials. Handle the materials with disposable gloves, if available.
Hygiene

• Clean and disinfect common spaces (e.g., showers and breakroom) frequently after each group of people, and at the end of the day

• Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, fridge/freezer doors and doorknobs

• Do not share used materials (e.g., towels, kitchen utensils, pens), and wash and dry them between uses

• When handling clothing and towels, wear gloves, do not shake the clothes, so it minimizes particle dispersion, and disinfect clothing hampers.
Personal care

• Wash hands frequently with soap (20 seconds)
  • Hand sanitizer can be used if soap is not available

• Cover cough

• Avoid touching your face, eyes and mouth, especially with unwashed hands
Work routines – Social distancing

• Avoid having groups of people in the same air space
• Plan break times so that only few workers are in the same room at the same time while they maintain at least 6 feet distance from each other
• Limit number of face-to-face meetings and consider alternatives, such as conference calls, texts or email
• When conducting meetings, limit them to small groups and keep at least 6 feet distance between people
Outside of work

• Limit interactions with people outside of work:
  • Avoid travel outside work
  • Do not carpool or limit carpooling to essential situations
  • Limit travel to essential locations (i.e., groceries and pharmacies)
  • Avoid large crowds (e.g., church, shopping centers and entertainment events)
  • Follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines at www.cdc.gov
Communicate

• If you or a family member test positive, or you suspect that you may have become exposed, let your supervisor know and seek advice on how to proceed. Subclinical infections play a role in spreading the virus.

• Follow recommendations posted by CDC or Your State Health Department since COVID-19 recommendations may change.
Contingency planning

• Who will take care of the animals if workers get sick?
• Who will be able to come to work if school is closed or if older parent is sick?
• Consider sick leave policies and comfort in reporting any illnesses.
Remember your neighbors and friends

• This is a time of high stress and anxiety
• Be aware of signs of stress
• Check on your neighbors
• Encourage regular social interaction and support (local churches, virtual coffee visits)

Mental Health Resiliency
http://umash.umn.edu/stress/
Summary

• Stay home if you are ill, even if you think it is just a cold
• Wash your hands
• Avoid touching your face
• Practice social distancing

2. www.cdc.gov/
3. umash.umn.edu/covid-19-resources
4. vetmed.umn.edu/centers-programs/swine-program/research/covid-19-resources-swine-industry
Thank you

torr0033@umn.edu