Keeping Producers/Ag Workers and their Families Safe during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Overview

• NIOSH Ag Centers – Who are we?
• Challenges for rural communities
• Business continuity
• Mental health resources
• Common questions
Mission of NIOSH Ag Centers

To minimize burden of occupational disease and injury to agriculture workers and their families

• Research
• Prevention
• Education
• Communication
Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center

Funding from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

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The One Health Approach

One Health

Coordinating

Communicating

Collaborating

People who protect human, animal, and environmental health, and other partners

To achieve the best health outcomes for people, animals, plants, and our environment

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases

UMASH Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center
THE HEALTH AND SAFETY CHALLENGE FOR OUR RURAL COMMUNITIES
Concerns

- Feeling that they are safe because they are already isolated
- Older rural populations (average age of a farmer is 58 years)
- Limited health care access
- Feeling of invincibility – “I’ll be fine”
- Limited workforce
How do we prepare for the oncoming wave?

- Awareness – it’s coming
- Engaging employees
- Setting up a plan
- “Leading well”
Examples of Recommendations for Employees

• Practice good biosecurity
  – Limit farm access
  – Limit activities to essential activities
• If sick, stay home (even with mild symptoms)
• Wash hands frequently or use hand sanitizer
• Disinfect commonly touched objects (phones, computer keyboards, door knobs)

Swine Disease Eradication Canter
Remember PPE (should be our last resort)

Hierarchy of Controls

- **Elimination**: Removes or prevents entry of the pathogen.
- **Engineering Controls**: Hospital design and set up to remove the opportunity for pathogen exposure at the source or improve compliance.
- **Administrative Controls**: Work policies and procedures that prevent pathogen exposure.
- **PPE**: Personal Protective Equipment used to prevent pathogen exposure and spread.

University of Minnesota
Driven to Discover
Social Distancing
What does that look like on a farm?

• Do early morning “huddles” to divide tasks and hear about potential problems (by video conferencing)
• Change work schedules to limit number of people coming in.
• Segregate in individual areas and use cell phones or video conferencing
• Limit number of people taking breaks (maybe just 2 people at a time in small break rooms)
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)
Create a Community Responding to Emerging Issues

Who do we engage
- Educators
- Community leaders
- Extension
- Health care providers
- Veterinarians
- Others?
Basic Reminders

- Wash your hands
- Avoid touching your face (hard to do)
- Stay home if you are ill, even if you think it is just a cold
- Practice social distancing
Also, “protect the animals”

• At this point, livestock or other animals have not been shown to transmit this virus...but we want to limit potential transmission to them.

• Remember the origin of this virus was likely bats through an intermediate host...and now adapted to people!

• Again, stay home if you are sick (livestock) or avoid contact (pets).
Frequently Asked Questions?

• What if one of our staff becomes ill with COVID-19?
• How long can COVID-19 survive on surfaces?
• What does social distancing look like in the workplace?
• Shouldn’t we all be wearing N-95 masks?
• What is the role of pets?
Summary Thoughts

• We need to raise the awareness for our rural communities
• Create plans now to support producers, workers, and their families
• Be aware of general prevention practices
• Engage your community
UMASH Resources

• General Information

• Mental Health Resiliency

• Handwashing
People Can Give Flu to Pigs!
Protecting People and Pigs

http://umash.umn.edu/biosecurity/

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