



10 Measures to Protect Against COVID-19 on Farms

Cautious times call for cautious measures and that's never been more apparent than now, with the COVID-19 coronavirus impacting people around the globe. Although there is no evidence that COVID-19 coronavirus can infect pigs, the highly contagious virus has made the protection of farm workers an absolute necessity for their safety and because these employees are essential in keeping the food industry viable.

COVID-19 is caused by a novel strain of coronavirus not previously known in humans. Presently, there is no vaccine and the virus is highly contagious, being able to live for extended periods on some surfaces and objects. The main transmission route is from person-to-person and between people who are within close contact (within 6 ft./1.5 m). Fever, dry cough and shortness of breath are the primary symptoms, but other symptoms include fatigue, anorexia or sore muscles. Some people can show no symptoms but still may shed the virus, according to [The Centers for Disease Control](#).

"PIC has developed some best practices on how to help protect farm employees," says Perry Harms, DVM, PIC Health Assurance Director for North America. "The company's culture of biosecurity and many of the standardized processes, resources, and training programs that protect our farms and pigs from disease are also important in protecting our people when it comes to COVID 19."

PIC has implemented the following protocols on their owned farms across the globe and encourages other farms to evaluate and implement recommendations to reduce COVID-19 impacts.

1. **Keep all non-essential visitors off the farm.** Fewer people means less risk. Keep it to the bare minimum of individuals coming into the farm.
2. **14-day quarantine after going through an airport.** If air travel is necessary, comply with at 2-week quarantine before returning to a farm/office.
3. **Drive to the farm.** If visitors are necessary, only allow visitors that can drive to the farm (not air travelers) to prevent exposure from airport travel.
4. **Stagger your break and lunchtimes;** avoid having too many people congregate in one area.
5. **Order extra supplies of essentials if possible.** "We don't know how long this pandemic will last and we don't know which items could be back-ordered as a result," Dr. Harms says.
6. **Communicate often with staff.** Continue to communicate with staff and provide examples to offer assurances that all precautions are taken.
7. **Strictly follow all biosecurity procedures and protocols.** Now is the time to tighten up all biosecurity measures. (i.e., NO SHORTCUTS).
8. **Clean and disinfect 'high-touch' surfaces daily** such as tables, hardbacked chairs, doorknobs, light switches, remotes, handles, desks, toilets, sinks. Diluted bleach (20 ml/liter), 70% alcohol solutions, and most registered household disinfectants work.
9. **Keep clothing and towels clean.** Wash and disinfect clothing and towels as well as clothing hampers.



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10. Avoid hand-to-hand contact. Don't shake hands to minimize the risk of spread and wear gloves for activities where contact might occur.

The CDC has offered recommendations to control the spread of the virus, including washing hands often and for at least 20 seconds and avoiding contact with people who you know to be sick. Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, and clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily.

Self-Assess

Complete a daily self-assessment to evaluate your risk of infecting others, Dr. Harms recommends. Consider your COVID-19 status, including your contact history with known COVID-19 positive people, the incubation period of 2 to 14 days, and any symptoms you may be experiencing. Employees should evaluate themselves for fever before entering the pig facility.

"No different than before COVID 19, anyone with a temperature of more than 100° F/37.8° C or symptoms such as a cough should not enter the farm," Dr. Harms says. "If you test positive for COVID-19, practice home isolation." For more information, go to the CDC website.

"This is a difficult time for everyone," Dr. Harms adds. "Be in contact with your manager with questions or concerns if you're having trouble dealing with the stress this outbreak has caused."

Support your well-being in these ways:

- Take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories, including social media. Repeatedly hearing about the pandemic can be upsetting.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths and stretch. Eat healthy and well-balanced, exercise regularly and get plenty of sleep.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk to people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

"Protecting the health of swine farm workers is our highest priority," Dr. Harms says. "People who work in swine production units are specialized technicians who understand disease transmission. Let's use that knowledge to keep our people and pigs healthy and well-cared-for every day.

"We're here to help and provide resources," Dr. Harms says. "We'll get through this if we all do our part."



Best Practices to Help Protect Farm Employees

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-  **2** 14-day quarantine after going through an airport.
-  **3** Drive to the farm.
-  **4** Stagger your break and lunchtimes.
-  **5** Order extra supplies.
-  **6** Communicate often with staff.
-  **7** Strictly follow all biosecurity procedures & protocols.
-  **8** Clean and disinfect 'high-touch' surfaces daily.
-  **9** Keep clothing and towels clean.
-  **10** Avoid hand-to-hand contact.



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