



AMIC GUIDELINES FOR PROCESSOR RISK MANAGEMENT DURING COVID-19

Version 2.0 (August 2020)

Background

The meat industry is uniquely positioned as one of the premier industries where food safety and hygiene is part of our core business. The meat industry operates to very stringent standards including HACCP, Good Manufacturing Practice, and Australian Standards etc, which are verified by state and federal food safety authorities.

For example

- Processing establishments are routinely washed down and sanitised and undergo a variety of monitoring and verification programs to ensure hygienic operations.
- Workers are required to follow strict hygiene and personal health policies and practices and wear suitable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as relevant (e.g. masks, hair nets, beard nets, gumboots, aprons, full length protective uniforms, gloves, etc).

Well-respected international agencies including the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and Australian Food Standards agency (FSANZ) have publicly stated that there is no evidence to suggest that coronavirus is transmitted in food.

AMIC understands that due to the unprecedented nature of COVID-19, it is unlikely there will be a single protocol adopted by federal and state health departments in relation to the measures to mitigate the risks of people-people transmission of Covid-19 in workplaces, and that any assessments are likely to be undertaken on a case-by-case basis.

Due to the rapidly evolving situation regarding the pandemic, these guidelines will be reviewed on a regular basis. This information is of an advisory nature only, and AMIC recommends members to speak to their respective health departments if they have any specific concerns or issues.

General Guidelines

People Management

To reduce the likelihood of people bringing COVID-19 onto the site from the community, it is recommended to do the following:

- Screen all employees, contractors, and visitors upon entry to site.
- Take temperature (contactless)
- Ask questions relating to health (symptoms), travel and contact with others (** see appendix below*)
- If temperature is greater than 38 °C, this is considered a fever, and the individual should be immediately isolated. In 30 minutes, retake temperature, and if it is still elevated, then staff member fails screening.
- If staff member does not pass screening, ask them to leave the premise immediately, ensured they are supplied a facemask.

Consider everyone on site to be a source of transmission and confine access to only those who are essential on site.

It is important to manage the movement of people on site to reduce transmission. Some ways this can be achieved include, by are not limited to:

- Do not allow staff to transit between production areas
- Reduce all movements through high transit departments, for example: HR, first aid,
- Manage flow of workers in and out of the premises, avoid contact between workers of different areas.

What if one of my workers feels unwell?

If any of your workers have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) such as cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, runny nose, fever, chills or sweats or loss of sense of taste and smell, they should get tested and isolate at home until they receive their test results.

Meat processors should have a policy in place where anyone experiencing symptoms (employees, contractors, visitors) must notify their employer immediately. They should leave the workplace, travelling by the least public means possible, get tested and then go home. They must quarantine at home

until they receive their test result.

Where possible it is important to understand the personal circumstances of employees if they have the potential to cross infect other employees at the site. For example, husband and wife or flat mates working across the site.

What if one of my workers has been diagnosed with coronavirus (COVID-19)?

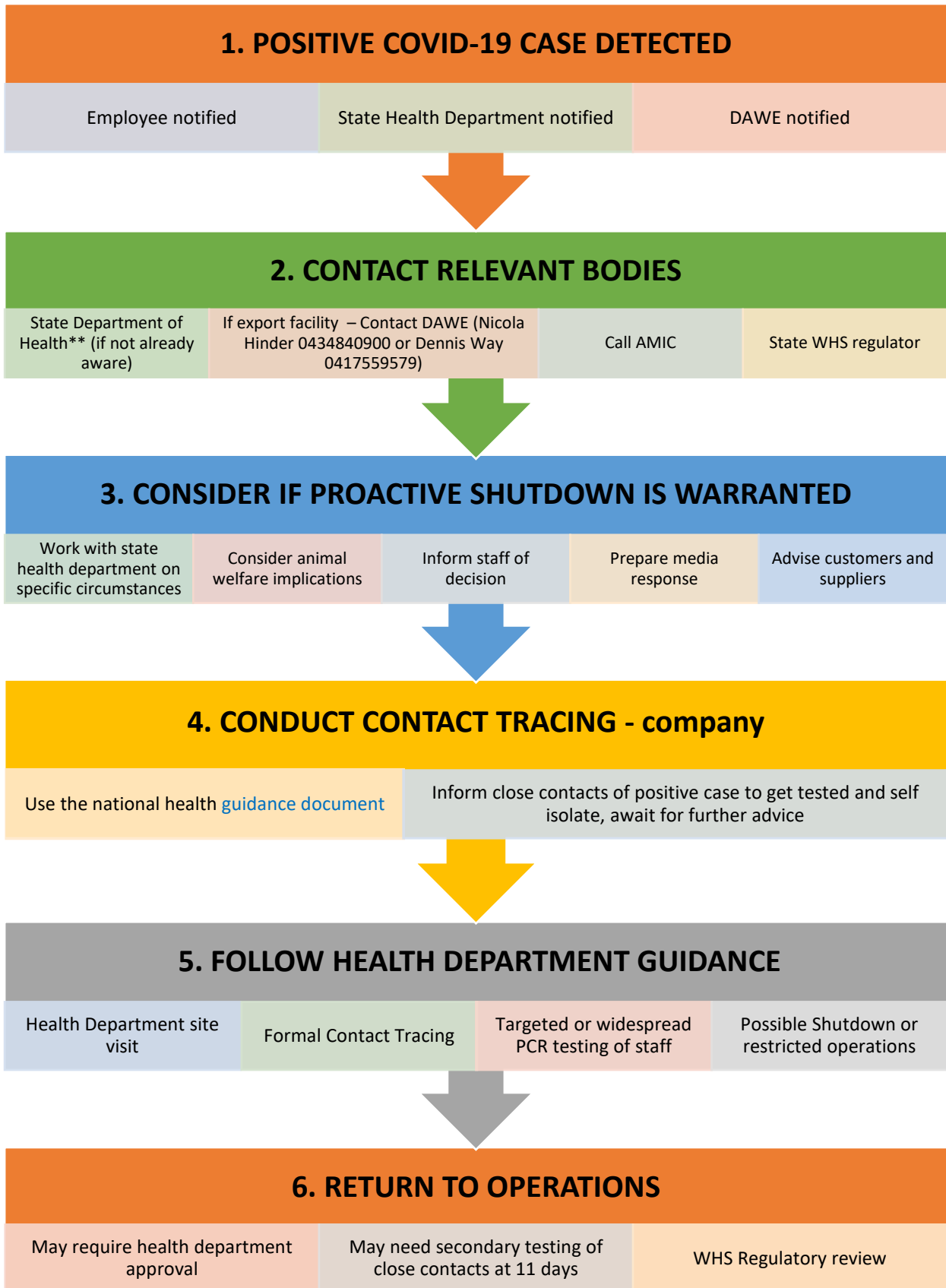
If a worker is **confirmed** as having coronavirus (COVID-19), the worker:

- must not attend the workplace under any circumstances
- must immediately tell their employer
- must follow all medical advice given to them by their treating medical practitioner and the relevant state health department.

In Victoria during the current Stage 4 restrictions, confirmation of a single positive case of coronavirus (COVID-19) at a processing facility will immediately make all workers at that site eligible for asymptomatic testing. This testing will be coordinated by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and is designed to identify other potential positive cases as quickly as possible.

In other states asymptomatic people do not usually require testing, except in special circumstances, e.g. active case finding in outbreak settings or returned travellers from overseas or Victoria. It is likely a positive case at a meat processing site would constitute a special circumstance and prompt testing.

Positive COVID-19 Case Process



Positive COVID-19 Case Process (cont.)

Role of the Relevant Department of Health

Although this may vary between states the relevant department is likely to:

- inform the workplace if the worker attended work whilst infectious
- provide guidance on the next steps that the employer must follow. This will vary, but is likely to include mapping:
 - people with whom the affected worker had close contact
 - what sites or areas of a site the affected worker attended
 - advise if partial or complete closure of the worksite is required, and when the worksite can be reopened.

Role of employers

- follow all instructions given by the department, including facilitating any testing that may be required and implementing measures to reduce transmission, such as partial or complete closure of the site for thorough cleaning according to departmental requirements, and when the site may be reopened.
- appropriately advise workers as soon as possible of the situation and required actions, avoid employees meeting in groups and communicate via text or other apps suitable to your workforce demographic (WeChat, WhatsApp)

Communication

It is important to ensure all staff are kept informed of plant and Government policies and updates to information as it evolves.

- Use clear and simple communications of what is expected both on site and in the community
- Where English is a second language, ensure translators are available.
- Use multiple communications modes suitable to your workforce. i.e email, posters, text messages, whats app / weChat.
- Where possible use visual cues and pictorials.
- Install clear signage at gates and entry points
- Consider a direct text system to minimise the need to call meetings to communicate important information to staff.
- Don't conduct mass gatherings e.g. all staff meetings, toolbox meeting, management meetings
- Make use of existing resources, both in English and translated, for example [here](#)
- Ensure policies are in place to ensure staff adherence to COVID policies and appropriate disciplinary actions are taken when required if policies, procedures, and appropriate usage of PPE are not adhered to.
- Have the ability for staff to discretely report any COVID-19 concerns directly.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Meat processing plants already have comprehensive cleaning and sanitising programs in place, although more specific, deep cleaning of premises may still be required if an outbreak of COVID-19 occurs. The relevant State Department of Health will give advice specific to your site's situation.

It is important to minimise contract cleaners and use your own team where possible to conduct deep clean. Use existing work instructions and standard operating procedures, amend these as required to include COVID specific steps, including using Department of Health approved sanitising agents (as advised).

For further information on effective deep cleaning including for offices and areas

ancillary to the processing plant, DHHS Victoria have provided a guideline to assist businesses in this area: [DHHS Guideline - Cleaning and Disinfection](#)

Personal Protective Equipment

The type of PPE you provide will depend on your workplace and the outcomes of your risk assessment.

When selecting suitable PPE standard principals still apply, where PPE is to be used it must be:

- suitable for the nature of the work or hazard.
- a suitable size and fit for the individual who is required to use it.
- clean and hygienic.
- in good working order.
- PPE should not be shared between workers, for example, masks, balaclavas, dustcoats where possible.

PPE should be stored in a way that reduces interaction between workers or the potential for workers to touch other people's PPE.

At a minimum AMIC recommend staff wear face masks at all times on site.

Self-Assessment for Meat Processors

AMIC recommend meat processors conduct internal audits or self-assessments on operations relevant to COVID-19 on a regular basis. Utilise current resources such as pre-op checklists and HACCP plan flow charts to customise your own site assessment.

DHHS have prepared a [COVID-19 Manufacturing Site assessment](#) for use in meat processing facilities.

Area Specific Guidelines

Area	Considerations
Visitors / Deliveries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No entry to site for non-essential visitors. • Ensure clear signage to communicate plant visitor policy. • Meet all essential visitors or contractors at main entry and screen with a health and travel and take temperature(contactless). • If the visitor does not pass screening, ask them to leave the premise immediately • Wherever possible delivery driver to stay in vehicle, if not possible then must stay 1.5m away from all staff
Staff Management Supervisors QA / QC / HR staff Lab Staff Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff not essential to on plant operations should work from home. • Minimise transit through plant. Eg assign QA to a single department • Keep critical personnel separated throughout the plant or offsite, and reduce contact where ever possible. • Reduce movements through high transit departments e.g. HR, first aid.
Lairage / Pre Mortem Inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage use of eNVDs • Staff to keep 1.5m from any contractors delivering livestock. • Ensure separation of staff in yards, pay attention to cross over in races. • Ensure sanitation of all equipment including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gate handles • Prodders, canes, rattles • Stunning equipment • Ensure dust coats are not shared

<p>Production Areas</p>	<p>All</p> <p>Minimise staff contact/proximity with each other wherever possible. Social distancing is the preferred management method. However, where this is not possible consider the use of screens.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid congestion at the entry/exit facilities such as apron and boot wash, and steriliser stations. • Thoroughly consider requirements of roles where employees work across an entire room. Eg supervisors, QA, Floor person, dropped meat attendant. • Specifically consider high risk areas which have a high staff density or where the set up requires staff to follow a chain and cross paths with others on return. <p>AMIC recommends all staff wear masks on site, if this is not currently feasible for your site, consider the following high risk areas as a priority.</p> <p>The following areas are identified as being potentially high risk:</p> <p>Slaughter Floors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legging (beef) • Punching skins (smallstock) • Evisceration • Inspection * • Trimming <p>*Inspection Staff</p> <p><i>Ensure all inspection staff – including non-company inspectors are cognisant of company COVID procedures, and follow response plans. Where possible have backups identified and refresher training complete where required.</i></p> <p><i>Exports plants must be aware of DAWE protocols and requirements for Commonwealth staff.</i></p>
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	<p>Boning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chain systems - boners crossing paths • Slicers working in close proximity <p>Packing</p> <p>Packers crossing paths from receipt to packing stations</p> <p>Load Out</p> <p>Workers crossing paths</p> <p>Offal / tripe / by-product rooms</p> <p>Staff working in close proximity and crossing paths between receipt / washing / packing stations</p> <p><i>Due to close contact, humidity and fluid splashes, these areas have a potential to be higher risk. As such specialist or combined PPE should be considered. E.g. face mask with face shield to stop mask becoming wet.</i></p>
<p>Lunchroom / Break areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of hand sanitising/ hand washing stations in lunch area • Ensure all staff practice social distancing on breaks. <p>This could be achieved by some or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increasing number of lunch rooms/marquee areas available to staff ○ Staggering lunch and other breaks ○ Marking appropriate social distances in break areas including smoking areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning and sanitising all lunchroom surfaces after each break. • Discourage sharing of food and other items e.g. cigarettes and lighters

Appendices

Screening Questions suggestions.

1. Have you travelled within the past 14 days to any COVID hotspots
2. Have you been in contact with anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID - 19?
3. Have you, within the last 14 days, been unwell or exhibited any symptoms including:
 - Loss of sense of smell
 - Sore throat
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
 - Fatigue
4. Have you been in contact with anyone that has had the above symptoms?

PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)

For PPE to be effective, it needs to be placed and removed in a particular order. This is the order recommended by the Australian Department of Health. The order stays the same, but steps may be skipped, depending on what level of PPE the staff members is wearing.

Fit in this order:

1. Wash hands or use alcohol-based rub
2. Mask
3. Goggles (if appropriate)
4. Gown/ Apron
5. Gloves

Remove in this order:

1. Gloves
2. Wash hands or use alcohol-based rub
3. Goggles (if appropriate)
4. Apron/Gown
5. Mask
6. Wash hands or use alcohol-based rub

Contact Numbers

- ****NATIONAL** [Department of Health](#)
(National Coronavirus Helpline 1800 020 080)
- **VIC** [Victorian Government Health and Human Services](#)
(Coronavirus Hotline – 1800 675 398)
- **NSW** [Department of Primary Industries](#) OR specific [Public Health Unit](#)
(Service NSW 137788)
- **QLD** Queensland Government (134 COVID [134 268]) OR
closest [Public Health Unit](#)
- **NT** Northern Territory COVID-19 hotline number 1800 008 002
(This number works within the NT only)
- **SA** [SA Health](#)
(Disease Report 1300 232 272) OR (SA COVID-19 Information Line 1800
253 787)
- **WA** (13 COVID OR [13 26843])

Some additional resources that might be useful

[Close Contact Spreadsheet](#)

[How to clean and disinfect after a COVID-19 case in the workplace](#)

[Business Support Pack – Information for Employers](#)

[COVID-19 Fact Sheet for Meat Industry](#)

[Supports for Abattoirs – Industry Briefing 28 July 2020](#)

[COVID Safe Plan for Businesses - Victoria](#)