

Guidance for Small Minnesota Meat Plants

The following guidance addresses some of the currently known information about COVID-19 and food safety, especially as it pertains to meat processing.

What happens if a meat plant employee is sick with respiratory symptoms?

Meat processors should consider implementing employee screening logs and ensure employees understand that they should stay home if they are ill.

- Employees who have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor and stay home.
- Sick employees should follow [CDC-recommended steps](#). Employees should not return to work until the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](#) are met, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.
- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and follow [CDC recommended precautions](#).

Can the virus be transmitted in meat?

There is no evidence that COVID-19 is transmitted through food consumption, including meat. Experience with other coronaviruses suggests these viruses survive poorly on surfaces, and thus there is a very low risk of spread from food products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient, refrigerated, or frozen temperatures.

How long can COVID-19 remain viable on different surfaces?

A recent study showed that COVID-19 was most stable on plastic (72 hours), followed by stainless steel (48 hours), and cardboard (24 hours) and copper (4 hours). Based on these results, it is critical that proper hand and respiratory hygiene practices, as well as social distancing, are followed.

Facilities should actively maintain routine, scheduled cleaning and sanitization of both production and non-production areas.

Focus on high risk areas (restrooms, break rooms, locker rooms, first aid areas, etc.) and surfaces (doorknobs, handrails, telephones, faucets, electronics, etc.) that employees regularly come in contact with, and clean and disinfect them frequently and on a regular and schedule.

[Van Doremalen, Bushmaker, Morris; The New England Journal of Medicine](#)

Can animals raised for food and animal products be source of infection with COVID-19?

As detailed by the CDC, there is no evidence to suggest that any animals, including pets, livestock, or wildlife in the United States, might be a source of COVID-19 infection at this time. There is also currently no evidence to suggest that imported animals or animal products pose a risk for spreading COVID-19 in the United States.

[CDC, Animals and Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

[Hoard's Dairyman, Cows and Coronavirus](#)

[FDA, Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

[CDC, How It Spreads](#)

[EFSA, Coronavirus: No Evidence that Food is a Source or Transmission Route](#)