



# GLOBAL CENTER FOR HEALTH SECURITY

## Poultry Facility COVID-19 Playbook



### Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health

## Background

Coronavirus Disease 2019, or COVID-19, is affecting farming industries in multiple states across the United States. Workers in poultry grower industries are vulnerable to COVID-19 given challenges posed by the close proximity of personnel involved in day to day operations, and a diverse workforce with cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic challenges to social distancing and limited access to other public health interventions.

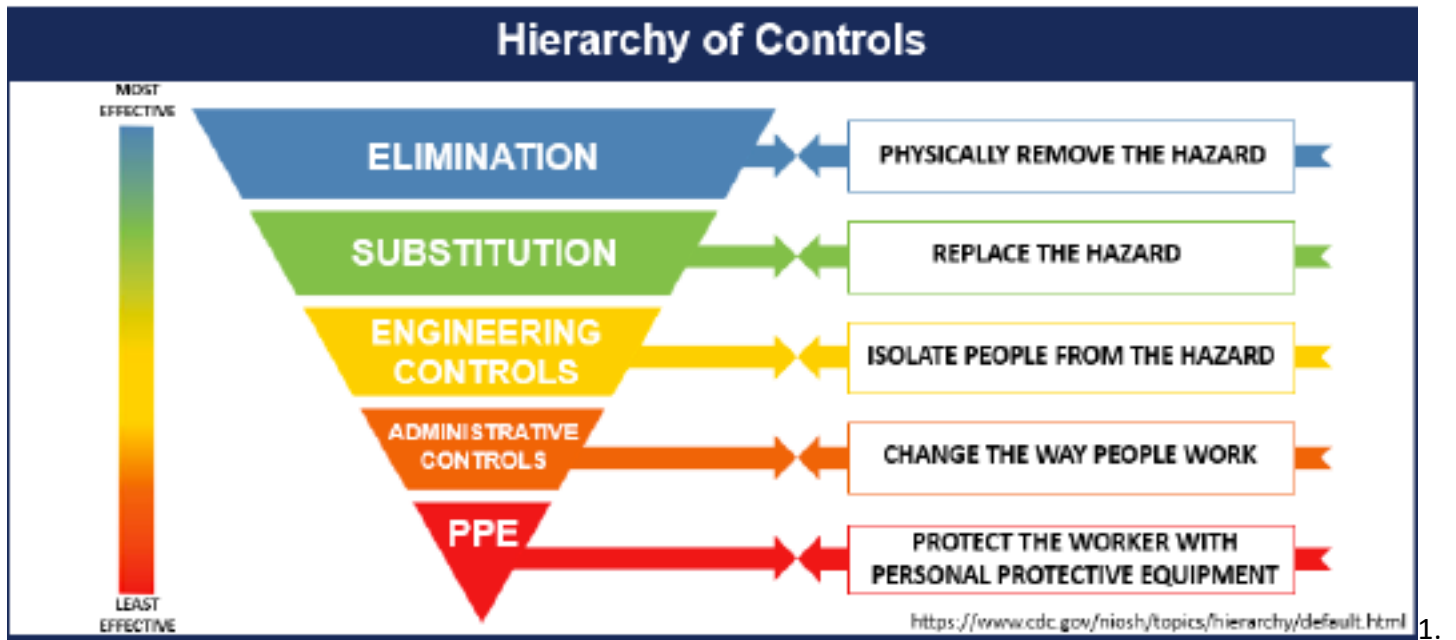
COVID-19 is primarily spread person-to-person by close contact (within 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person sneezes, coughs, or talks and indirectly when a person touches a surface contaminated with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and then touches their nose, mouth, or eyes. The virus can also be transmitted through the fecal-oral route.

In a pandemic setting, the health of each worker is critical to the health of the community and to sustaining the critical infrastructure of the farming industry. Preventing the spread of the outbreak also means addressing the health needs of workers. These efforts should be made an urgent public health priority because infection among worker populations could also lead to community infection, eventually affecting further spread in entire population's health.

This guide is intended to provide best practices and recommendations for poultry growing facilities to minimize the risk that COVID-19 poses to employees and the community and to reduce disruptions to business operations. As with any infection prevention and control measures, the foundation of successful implementation requires a culture of safety to exist where all stakeholders have equitable ownership of the safety of the community and a culture that allows all members to identify potential hazards without fear of reprisal. In healthcare environments, this is practiced when all stakeholders (patients, staff, technicians, nurses and physicians) are equitably engaged in risk and intervention assessment and all have a responsibility and mechanisms to identify potential risks and process improvements without reprisal. Likewise, reducing risks posed by COVID-19 in poultry grower facilities will rely on full adoption of this culture of safety by all from owners, management and workers.

Recommended safety measures to be implemented are based on the hierarchy of controls, a hazard mitigation framework that outlines controls in decreasing order of effectiveness from engineering controls, to administrative controls, to personal protective equipment (PPE) (see Figure 1). This is a guide only and should be adapted to the context of each operation. Facilities should work in coordination with local public health departments to tailor specific situations and needs to each facility.

Figure 1. Hierarchy of Controls.



## Engineering Controls

*Engineering Controls are controls that place a barrier between the worker and the virus. They are not dependent on a person's knowledge, practice, or compliance; therefore, they reduce the opportunity for error.*

### Physical Barriers

When possible, use physical barriers to separate workers from one another and minimize the opportunities from person-to-person transmission of Covid-19. Some strategies for installing physical barriers include:

- Determine where it is possible to place a physical barrier between workers (e.g., plexiglass)
- Identify opportunities to place physical barrier in common meeting areas with built-in seating such as break or procedure rooms (e.g., cardboard, plexiglass partitions)

### Ventilation

- Wherever possible, exhaust room air and deliver clean air; if re-circulation is required, this should be done along with appropriate filtering (HEPA) or sterilization measures (e.g., UV)
- If fans are used in the facility, ensure fans blow clean air toward workers' breathing zone



## Administrative Controls

*Administrative controls are considered less effective than engineering controls but are the most common control measures available for Covid-19. These include policies, procedures, training, and workplace practices. Ineffective policies or practices or inconsistent compliance may heighten exposure risks.*

### Universal Mask Policy

A policy should be implemented for all employees and essential visitors to wear a mask at all times while on the facility premises. It is possible for an individual to have Covid-19 and not show any signs or symptoms, and still be able to transmit the disease to others in close contact. As a result, the CDC has issued [guidelines](#) recommending all persons wear face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures cannot be achieved.

There are different types of masks. It is highly recommended, as available, to provide employees with N95 masks due to the close contact they have with other employees and to protect from dust and poultry particulates in the work environment. If N95 masks are not available, use of procedure or fabric masks, while not providing protection against dust and particulates, will provide some protection against the person to person spread of the virus.

Provide information to employees on proper face mask use (more information in the personal protective equipment section on Page 10).

### Communication/Education

Communicating to and educating employees is a fundamental tool to manage risk and ensure accurate information on Covid-19 is provided to workers.

- Post signage throughout facility on risk-minimizing behaviors for employees. Examples include:
  - Hand-washing reminders and procedures
  - Covid-19 symptoms and how to stop the spread
  - Facility screening process/requirements
  - Cough/sneeze etiquette
- Provide easily translatable and understandable posters/infographics in the first language of your employees. These can be provided as take-home materials to employees
- Provide information to employees on self-monitoring of Covid-19 symptoms and guidance for quarantine/self-isolation
- Provide resources and education to employees on social distancing outside of the workplace
- Refresh staff on proper hand hygiene and glove practices and refraining from touching their face

## Communication and Education Resources:

CDC has compiled printable posters for Covid-19 awareness and stopping transmission [here](#)

WHO has printable posters for handwashing procedures [here](#)

Short educational videos for the Hispanic/Latino communities are available on Covid-19 [prevention](#), [staying home](#), and staying safe when a [family member is diagnosed](#) with Covid-19

## General Guidance for Worker Protection at Home and in the Community

- Provide employees with information on safe [social distancing practices](#)
- Provide information to employees on self-monitoring of [Covid-19 symptoms](#)
  - Encourage them to stay home if they have ANY symptoms of Covid-19
- Promote basic [protective measures against Covid-19](#)
  - Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds frequently
  - Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth
  - Avoid contact with people who are sick
  - Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in the home (e.g., doorknobs, tables, phones)
  - Follow guidance of local and state public health on staying home, avoiding non-essential errands and social gatherings, and respecting the ten-person limit
- Masks outside of the workplace
  - Encourage workers to wear cloth masks outside of the workplace (e.g., transport, anywhere when a 6' distance between individuals cannot be achieved)
  - Encourage workers to wear cloth masks during transport to work and to protect others prior to them receiving a new mask for their shift
    - If using a cloth mask, provide workers information on [cleaning and use of cloth masks](#)
    - *Workers should be careful not to touch their eyes, nose, or mouth during removal*
    - *Perform hand hygiene immediately after removal*
- Carpooling
  - Encourage workers to minimize carpooling to work, when possible
  - As much as possible, limit the number of people per vehicle and space out seating
  - Encourage workers to do hand hygiene prior to entering the vehicle and as soon as they get to work or home
  - Remind carpoolers of risk-minimizing personal behaviors such as cough etiquette and avoiding touching their faces

## Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection

Current evidence suggests that the virus that causes Covid-19 can remain viable on surfaces for hours to days. As such, sound environmental cleaning and disinfection is a key factor in preventing Covid-19 transmission in poultry facilities. Daily and routine cleaning and disinfection should be conducted to minimize surface contamination in common areas and on high-touch surfaces.



- **Develop Standard Operating Procedures**
  - Develop an SOP for enhanced cleaning and disinfection of common contact areas
  - Identify common high-touch surfaces (e.g., tables, door handles) and develop a checklist to ensure frequent sanitization throughout the day
  - In the event an employee tests positive for Covid-19, develop an SOP for cleaning and disinfecting impacted areas (e.g., break rooms, washrooms, pathways, etc)
  - Develop a process for routine deep cleaning of common areas, either daily/nightly or, at minimum, weekly
- **Ensure adequate supplies**
  - Ensure hand wash stations or sanitizer dispensers are available throughout facility, particularly at entrance, exits, and transition areas
  - Assess supply of cleaning supplies, sanitizers, and disinfectants and encourage practical use
    - Note: Follow manufacturer recommendations; some disinfectants may be caustic and require gloves and ventilation
  - Provide readily available sanitizing wipes, soap, and paper towels in breakrooms
  - Ensure [EPA-registered disinfectants](#) with label claims for use against SARS-Cov-2 are used
- **Minimize touching of items by multiple workers**
  - Minimize the number of workers using the same tool
  - Identify common shared tools and develop procedures to sanitize between users
  - Use no-touch receptacles and sanitizing stations when possible

### **Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Resources:**

The CDC has guidance for [cleaning and disinfecting facilities](#)

The EPA has a list of [EPA-registered disinfectants](#) effective against the virus that causes Covid-19

OSHA has general guidance for [environmental cleaning and decontamination](#) for Covid-19

### **Active Screening**

To prevent the transmission of Covid-19 in facilities, all employees and essential visitors/contractors should be screened daily. This should include temperature screening as well as screening questions designed to identify individuals with other [Covid-19 symptoms](#) or exposure risks.

### **Screening questions**

- Develop and implement screening questions to be conducted daily. Examples could include:
  - Have you been in contact with someone confirmed with or suspected to have Covid-19 in the last 14 days?
  - Are you currently experiencing any flu-like symptoms (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath)



- **Temperature Screening**
  - Implement a daily temperature screening prior to entrance into the facility
  - Ensure screener is trained to administer temperature checks
  - Ensure screener has adequate PPE and, as applicable, maintains social distancing as testing is performed
- **Secondary screening**
  - If offered, secondary screening should be conducted by staff with medical training
  - Secondary screening is warranted if an individual provides a positive response to any of the screening questions or has a temperature over 100.4°F (38°C)

### Social Distancing

Social distancing is a strategy to reduce the spread of Covid-19 by limiting interactions with others. Workers that are able to telework should be encouraged to do so. For essential onsite workers, workers should maintain at least a 6 feet distance from others whenever possible. Measures to promote social distancing in poultry facilities are noted below.

- Develop a policy to limit visitors except for required essential services
- Strategies to ensure social distancing during breaks
  - Stagger break times to avoid large groups of employees
  - Provide additional rooms for break areas or erect tents outside of the facility
  - Reset break and meeting room settings to promote physical distancing
    - Limit chairs per table
    - Use tape on floors, where possible, to designate spots 6 feet apart
    - Ensure cleaning of lunch tables between use either by self-cleaning or tools (e.g., laminated card with green side and red side) to notify employees the table is cleaned and ready to be used
- If office staff are required onsite, maintain 6 feet distancing practice in all work areas

### Cohorting and Personnel Workflow/Movement

Wherever possible, implement cohorting of small, consistent teams to minimize the number of potential exposures for each person. Cohorting will also simplify the identification process of possible exposed workers if a case of Covid-19 is confirmed.

Wherever possible, implement cohorting of work teams

- Work teams should be small and consistent, so that employees in close proximity to each other always work together, with lockers, and breaks taken together
- This serves to both decrease number of potential exposures for each person and to simplify identifying possible exposures if a case presents
- As able, promote unidirectional flow through locker areas and when entering/exiting into the barn
  - Employees enter the uniform area with clean hands (hand sanitizer dispenser available at entry)
  - Touching non-selected uniform clothing and hangars kept to minimum
  - Soiled uniforms kept separate from clean uniforms through a designated drop zone





## Workforce Policies

Strategies to promote workers staying home when presenting any signs or symptoms of Covid-19 are fundamental to reducing transmission of Covid-19 in poultry facilities. In addition, facilities should have concrete procedures in place that detail actions to take if a worker tests positive for Covid-19 and requirements for workers to return to work following illness.

- Institute flexible workplace and sick leave policies
- Institute a no-penalty approach for those taking sick leave
- Recognize certain policies may incentivize employees to come to work sick (e.g., extra food at end of shift, bonus pay)
- Develop SOPs that detail actions to be taken if an employee or visitor is tested for Covid-19 and/or tests positive for Covid-19 or is exposed to an individual positive for Covid-19. This should include:
  - Process to contact relevant third parties who may have been exposed
  - Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces to limit employee exposure
  - Working with local authorities to take appropriate steps
- Develop a return to work policy in coordination with local public health to department
- Identify workplace coordinators for Covid-19 issues and their workplace impact
- Develop plans to operate with a reduced workforce
- Cross-train workers to perform essential functions to maintain operations

## Testing

- A testing strategy should be developed in coordination with local public health officials
- If an employee is suspected or confirmed to have Covid-19, quarantining and testing should be prioritized among close contacts of the confirmed case
  - If cohorting of small and consistent teams was implemented, this would include other individuals on the positive case's team
- Work with local and state public health officials to conduct testing of priority cases



## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

*PPE is considered the least effective method to protect workers due to its reliance on the user; if the user wears improperly, or the PPE fails, the worker is exposed. However, this does not mean PPE is not important. Workers should be provided appropriate PPE and trained on its correct use.*

Appropriate PPE should be provided to all employees. Per the Universal Mask policy recommendation (Page 5), all employees and essential visitors/contractors should be provided an N95 or procedural mask, when available, upon entrance to the facility due to close contact with other employees. Cloth masks may not provide the needed protection for these workers but are an alternative if N95 and procedure masks are unavailable.

**Employers should take care to ensure all employees wear PPE properly and correctly.** The mask should cover both the mouth AND nose. Workers should avoid touching the front of the mask and should not allow the mask to hang around the neck. Careful compliance to proper mask use is essential. Proper hand hygiene after facial coverings are removed should be emphasized.

Checklist or instructions informing proper donning and doffing of PPE should be posted in the first language of employees. Doffing of PPE to reduce disease transmission is especially critical: checklists should ensure hands are clean/sanitized when taking off safety goggles, masks, or any other item that may cause a worker to touch their face.

Measures should also be developed to distribute daily PPE to avoid unnecessary touching by multiple workers.

### **Resources for Personal Protective Equipment**

[OSHA Guidance for Prevention and Control](#)

[The Association for Professionals in Infection Control \(APIC\) Procedure mask Poster “Do’s & Don’ts”](#)

[The National Emerging Special Pathogens Training and Education Center Webinar on Varying masks](#)

[CDC Understanding the Difference between N95s and Procedure Masks](#)

[CDC Information on cleaning and use of cloth masks](#) (when necessary)



## Additional General COVID-19 Resources

[CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)

[CDC Basic Information on Covid-19](#)

[CDC Guidance for Critical Infrastructure Workers with Covid-19 Exposure](#)

[OSHA Guidance for Preparing Workplaces for Covid-19](#)

[OSHA Guidance for Prevention and Control](#)

[FDA Frequently Asked Questions for COVID-19](#)

