

# COVID-19

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Thursday 19 March 2020**  
Please check back for updates

### **What impact has Covid-19 had on Regional Development Programs?**

In line with the recommendations of government and health professionals, Dairy Australia has reduced face-to-face events, workshops and meetings. However, we are here to support you. We will continue to provide information and resources for farm businesses, staff and the wider industry. We are currently developing industry-specific information in response to Covid-19. Please continue to reach out to our regional teams for information and resources.

### **Does COVID-19 affect livestock or milk?**

There is no known transmission risk to livestock or through milk.

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) have confirmed the COVID-19 virus has an animal source but the current spread is a result of human to human transmission. There is no evidence that livestock can contract or spread the disease.

Food Standards Australia & NZ (FSANZ) have reported that transmission of COVID-19 through food is considered unlikely, and there is no evidence of this occurring to date. FSANZ considers it unlikely that milk would be a carrier of the virus, and pasteurisation during milk processing would reduce any slight risk to negligible levels.

### **Will Covid-19 affect milk pick-ups?**

Dairy Australia is working with processors, tanker operators, haulage companies and farmer representatives to develop protocols to ensure milk pick-ups can continue without major interruption. These will be published for wide reference once finalised and endorsed by food regulators.

### **Will milk supply chains be protected from interruption?**

The Australian dairy industry calls on State and Federal governments, as well as local councils to formally acknowledge the *collection and processing of dairy products as an essential service offered to communities across the country*.

This means guaranteeing a continuity for all milk collection operations across Australia and ensuring supply chains are kept open to manage product flows – in turn enabling the dairy industry to keep retail stores stocked and households and food-service facilities (e.g. child care, schools) provided for.

As COVID-19 plans are drafted to restrict and delay the spread, we urge the State and Federal governments, as well as local councils to remember the crucial importance of functioning dairy supply lines across Australia and take into account:

1. Smooth and continuous supply of dairy products across Australia is vital in all stages of COVID-19 management plans and across the country.

2. Dairy is not a virus transmission vector: Food Standards Australia New Zealand issued a statement in March 2020<sup>1</sup> that transmission through food is unlikely and there is no evidence this is occurring to date. The Victorian Government has further cited this information.
3. Raw milk is highly perishable and requires processing within 48 hours. Therefore, milk collection needs to be maintained without any disruptions.
4. There has been a significant increase in demand for dairy products in recent weeks. Therefore, it's ever more crucial supply chains are kept open to manage product flow to ensure the industry can keep shelves and fridges stocked.

### **Am I going to be able to buy everything I need for my business?**

There is a chance local service providers or wholesalers may have interruptions to their normal operations which could make it difficult to get your usual business inputs or services.

Consider what goods (e.g. chemicals) you rely on to keep your business going in the coming three to four months and reach out to your suppliers to understand their plans to maintain business continuity.

If you encounter a major disruption, contact your processor for help in making alternative arrangements.

### **What do I do if I have a staff member returning/arriving from overseas?**

The Australian Government has imposed a universal precautionary self-isolation requirement on all international arrivals, effective as at 11:59pm Sunday 15 March 2020.

This means that all people - whether they be citizens, residents or visitors - will be required to self-isolate for 14 days upon arrival in Australia. Enhanced screening for arrivals will remain in place to identify anyone arriving sick or with symptoms of COVID-19.

### **What is Covid-19/Coronavirus?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause illness from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

Initial human infections of the novel type of coronaviruses were acquired from exposure to animals at a live animal market in Wuhan.

The disease caused by the novel coronavirus has been named Covid-19 by the World Health Organization.

Common symptoms of the disease include a fever, cough and difficulty breathing. Severe cases can cause pneumonia, and even death.

More resources are available from the [Department of Health](#).

### **How does Coronavirus spread?**

Covid-19 is spread from someone with confirmed coronavirus to other close contacts with that person through contaminated droplets spread by coughing or sneezing, or by contact with contaminated hands, surfaces or objects.

The time between when a person is exposed to the virus and when symptoms first appear is typically 5 to 6 days, although may range from 2 to 14 days. For this reason, people who might have been in contact with a confirmed case are being asked to self-isolate for 14 days.

It is important to note that no public health authority has advised of any concern that this illness can be transmitted or has been known to be transmitted via food or drink.

### **What do I do if I suspect I have Coronavirus?**

If you develop symptoms while travelling or within 14 days of returning to Australia, see a doctor for urgent assessment. Call the doctor's clinic or hospital before you arrive and advise them of your travel history.

[Guidelines from the Department of Health](#) recommend Australian doctors consider testing people with a clinically compatible illness who have travelled to certain countries in the 14 days before onset of symptoms.

### **How can I best protect myself against the virus?**

- Practice coughing and sneezing hygiene – always cover your mouth and nose when sneezing
- Wash your hands regularly – always before eating – count to 20 seconds and wash hands all over – 20-seconds is much longer than one thinks
- Keep your hands away from your mouth, nose and eyes – that's how most people get the virus – not by breathing it – the virus appears not to infect in airborne aerosol fashion very well
- When in public, including on public transportation, practice common sense separation and distancing
- Take up the opportunity to get the flu vaccine. Sick people are more susceptible, so even if the seasonal flu vaccine is only 30 – 40% effective, it's worth getting.

### **Should I use a face mask?**

Suitably accredited facemasks are in drastically short supply internationally and authorities are asking that everyone support efforts to prioritise access for health care workers and those working in care settings.

From a practical perspective, if you're not trained and they're not properly fitted (no facial hair) and you have clean hands when you put them on and take them off, they are ineffective.

### **What does self-isolation mean?**

If you are required to self-isolate following travel or due to illness in your family, you should stay home — in your room, your apartment, or your house. Do not go to work, classes, athletic events, or other social gatherings for 14 days after returning from travel or potential exposure. In addition to the standard hygiene practices listed above, you should:

- Limit contact with other people as much as possible. This includes isolating yourself as much as possible from anyone living in your residence.
- Avoid sharing household items. Do not share drinking glasses, towels, eating utensils, bedding, or any other items until you are no longer asked to self-quarantine.
- Keep your surroundings clean.

### **How do I make an informed decision about whether to travel?**

The following sources of information are a good starting point to informed decisions about personal travel:

- [Department of Home Affairs](#) immigration restrictions (including returning citizens)
- [Department of Health](#) daily alerts
- [Smartraveler.gov.au](#) Coronavirus travel advice
- World Health Organisation [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) technical guidance](#)

You should also investigate what coverage you have under your travel insurance as this is often limited in the case of epidemics or pandemics and could leave you vulnerable to medical costs in event you contract the virus overseas.

### **Do I need to worry about shortages of household goods?**

No, the Australian Government has plans in place to ensure access to critical supplies in the event of emergencies.

If you take any medications, consider securing an extra week to four weeks of supplies in case of the need to self-isolate.

Unlike other emergencies, there's no reason that a pandemic will take out your electricity, gas, or water, so you should be able to cook as usual.

### **When will a vaccine be available?**

Despite hype from heads of state and media, academic institutions feverishly working on a Covid-19 vaccine have clearly stated that clinical trials to ensure safety and efficacy will mean even if an approach is identified quickly, it will be a further 12-18 months before it becomes available on the market.

### **Got more questions?**

Email [c19@dairyaustralia.com.au](mailto:c19@dairyaustralia.com.au) or call 1800 004 377.