Protocol to Manage Risk of COVID-19 for Continuation of Meat Processing

Version 2 - 29/03

Essential Service

The Government has put in place strict controls on movements to prevent the spread of Covid-19, including closure of "non essential" businesses. The key element of the Alert is to reduce and control movement of people, with a lockdown of all non-essential businesses.

Primary production and businesses in production and distribution of food and beverage is an essential service.

The paramount consideration is that the virus cannot be permitted to spread. Operators must be able to show how their continuing operations does not compromise this. The expectations of essential operators are extremely high. In essence, operators are expected to achieve the same non-spread outcomes as would be achieved if staff were isolated at home (including when they are moving to and from home). This is not business as usual. Operators must make whatever changes that are required to keep their people safe from transmission. There will be some verification by MPI Vets. Issues raised in either case will be reviewed for corrective action.

Meat processing companies must register with MPI who will asking questions in order to be satisfied that the necessary steps have been taken. Registration will be done online at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/COVID19Registration

All sites should have in place a registered Covid-19 safety plan.

Sites not meeting standards will be ordered to cease operation by MPI. Each company to perform weekly internal audits and confirm to MPI that they are adhering to the standards that have been sent.

To ensure that production is maintained (albeit at possibly a reduced level), meat processing operators must adhere to the following protocol.

While a purpose of this protocol is to provide a measure of certainty and consistency for meat processors and associated services, the covid-19 response is highly challenging and policies and procedures are developed in a highly uncertain environment. MIA members are asked to feedback to MIA how this protocol is working in practice, so the protocol can be reviewed and updated as may be necessary.

Summary

All establishments should have in place a registered Covid-19 food safety plan and this should strive for a social distancing of 2 metres at all times.

In exceptional circumstances, work stations spaced between 1 and 2 metres are permitted with additional safety measures to minimise the possibility of airborne transmission.

Work stations spaced less than a metre apart are not permitted.

Who the protocol applies to
- Truck drivers (livestock trucks and trucks carrying saleable product) coming onto plant
- Processing staff (including livestock yards, slaughter floor, boning room, coldstores, rendering, hides and skins, and load-out)
- Laboratory staff
- Essential maintenance staff (engineers, services, cleaners, etc)
- Verification and meat inspection staff.
- 3rd party support (laundry, packaging suppliers, refrigeration contractors, chemical suppliers, KiwiRail etc.)

Unless necessary to plant operation, office staff and other personnel must work at home.

Processors must identify a minimum level of workers necessary to maintain production.

Processors must ensure returning workers in all cases are not subject to victimisation under any circumstance.

Workers when outside the processing site must observe the instruction to stay at home and stop all interactions with others outside of their household.

Recording of workers and establishment of teams
Workers on site, contact details, and their work and where they are working, is to be recorded.

Workers should be placed into teams. Mixing of workers between different teams should be minimised.

Access to essential personnel (close site to non essential personnel)

Sites must be secured, with entry only to essential personnel.	Implement access control at all entrance points to control and record people and vehicle movement.
Secure coldstores, storage rooms and warehouses	Ensure coldstores, storage rooms and warehouses are secured and regularly checked.
People coming onto sites (i.e. essential contractors, engineering and technical services and transport operators)	Essential contractors or support personnel to complete a Health Checklist prior to entry. They will also be issued with contractor access policy and told requirements for Covid-19 safety at site they are expected to follow
Livestock transport drivers	Livestock transport companies must have procedures for managing the Covid-19 risk when loading livestock at farms. Drivers should not proceed beyond the unloading ramps when unloading stock at the meat processing site.
Processing staff (including livestock yards, slaughter floor, boning room, coldstores, rendering, hides and skins, laboratory, engineering and container load-out),	Daily access to plant is controlled and to be recorded. Workers returning to work from absence will not be allowed in their place of work without return to work procedure which includes a Heath Checklist.
Verification and meat inspection staff (MPI & AssureQuality)	To complete Health Checklist prior to first time entry, and if anything changes with their contacts or health status they will also be issued with a Contractor Access Policy
Screen for health status	Workers must declare if they have had any Covid-19 symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath or sore throat) before entering site.

Raised awareness of personal hygiene and physical distancing
Processors must maintain general awareness for all workers on the need to:

Wash hands frequently, with soap or sanitiser and for 20 seconds	Wash hands regularly, especially at the following times: • After blowing nose, coughing or sneezing • After visiting a public space, including break rooms and change rooms • When entering and leaving work areas • After touching surfaces used by others • After using the toilet • Before and after eating • After handling rubbish • After donning and doffing PPE • When hands are visibly dirty. Increase monitoring of handwashing and personal hygiene in processing departments and record on process controls.
Avoid touching face	Stress importance of avoiding touching face (eyes, nose and/or mouth)
Sneezing or coughing	Cover face with tissue or use crook of elbow Anyone with repeated coughing or sneezing should be risk assessed and sent home.
Maintain physical distance from others (social distancing)	This needs to be adhered to during donning and doffing, rest breaks, meal breaks and use of ablution facilities.
Stay home if feeling sick	Workers must declare if they have had any Covid-19 symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath or sore throat) before entering site. Stay home if coughing, sneezing, or running a temperature, and contact appropriate manager or Supervisor to notify absence.
Cleaning/disinfection of non-processing high risk areas All high traffic areas in non-processing areas must be regularly cleaned and disinfected.	Use antibacterial sanitisers to wipe or spray clean contact surfaces or high traffic touch points. Clean surfaces such as office amenities, ante/washing rooms, lockers and change rooms in between shift change overs. Clean and disinfect rest break and meal break communal areas after each break OR every 2 hours.
Cleaning/disinfection of high risk processing areas (see below for guidance/definitions on high and medium risk areas)	Practice as per the Company and Site risk management plan (RMP) per existing MPI requirements.
Cleaning/disinfection of medium risk non-processing areas	Medium risk areas must be spray/wiped down daily - this includes dry stores, exterior of plant pedestrian gates / hand rails, engineering workshop benches (particularly kiosks and contractor spaces) and maintenance tools.

This applies at home as much as work. All workers must strictly adhere to this.

Transport to/from work
Must be:

in a car alone or in car with people from your own household	Wash hands before and after every journey. If possible, sanitise wipe down high touch surfaces.
in approved car pool	Car pool group must be recorded and from same work team in workplace. Sanitizer wipe of high touch areas before and after journey to and from work. Wash hands before and after every journey.
in van / bus	Sanitizer wipe of high touch areas before and after journey to and from work. A 2 meter distance needs to be applied. Where this is not possible appropriate PPE needs to be worn. Wash hands before and after every journey.

The above applies to travel to and from work and all other travel.

Distancing at work
All sites should strive for a social distancing of 2 metres at all times.

Where unavoidable, work stations spaced between 1 and 2 metres are permitted.

Work stations spaced less than a metre apart are not permitted.

All staff must:

Movement on site restricted	Workers to remain strictly at their assigned work station, in assigned amenities and rest break areas. Workers must walk directly between their assigned areas and the entrance/exit to work (e.g. car park). Create walkways to ensure workers are separated as much as possible when moving through work areas.
Establish work teams	Establish work teams. Minimise contact between teams.
Stagger work times to avoid mixing of teams	Stagger work times (rest breaks, lunch, start of shifts) to avoid mixing teams. If possible, use separate ingress and egress zones.
Work in processing operations will be by essential personnel only	Only workers essential to processing will be permitted in processing operations (i.e. boners, slaughtermen & labourers)
Minimise contact between people at site	Minimise contact with essential visitors using facilities such as pay-wave, internet banking and drop shipments.
>2 meter separation	Unless necessary for processing, staff will work at least 2 meters from each other. Workers can occasionally pass each other but must minimise time and avoid face-to-face contact as much as possible.
Working where >2 meter separation not possible	Where staff must work within 1 to 2 meters of other staff, they will:

	• Wear appropriate PPE (such as safety glasses, visors, gloves, aprons or other covers). Use of face masks is not mandatory but is recommended if practicable. If it is not possible to provide face-masks, then additional controls should be considered, such as: • Ensure that there is a screen between workers. • Use directional facing – workers are positioned so as to not face each other.
Work stations with spacing of less than 1 metre are not allowed	Work stations with spacing of less than 1 metre are not allowed, except where workers might be briefly pass one another and appropriate PPE is used.
Where practicable, use plastic barriers	Where feasible and practicable, install plastic barriers to ensure separation.

Avoid large numbers of people in the same place

Time for commencing and ending work, and lunch and rest breaks must be staggered so as to ensure personal contact is limited.	Do not mix different teams of workers in the same space at the same time and ensure sufficient time between breaks to avoid accidental contact in corridors and areas people have to move through to get to their assigned areas. Stagger shifts and lunch and rest breaks between different processing areas. Lunch and rest areas to be cleaned and disinfected between breaks.
Limit the number of people permitted in smoko / rest break areas	Set up areas to maintain physical distance of at least 2 meters from others (i.e. space tables and chairs further apart where able). Temporary break areas (such as marquees) need to be established to ensure compliance.

Ensure sickness leave protocols are clear to all workers

Worker has Covid-19 symptoms must stay home and contact doctor or Healthline	If a worker has Covid-19 symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath) they must contact doctor or Healthline 0800 358 5453 immediately. The worker must call Return to Work Officer (RTWO), Supervisor or appropriate manager and confirm they have called doctor or Healthline. Worker calls RTWO, Supervisor or appropriate manager and notifies them that they are going to be absent and the reason why i.e. symptoms that they are experiencing.
Worker reports or is observed with Covid-19 symptoms	If worker has Covid-19 symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath), send them home immediately (ideally provide them with tissues or mask to cover face). Supervisor to identify other workers in that team and possible work-related "close contacts" (including address and phone numbers) in case public health need to trace (if need be, by speaking to worker by telephone). Worker must immediately advise RTWO or appropriate manager that they have contacted doctor or Healthline, and if a Covid-19 test undertaken and disclose the test result.

Confirmed Covid-19 or Compulsory Self-Isolation Required (e.g. close contact)	Any worker with a **confirmed** case of Covid-19 or is put into compulsory self-isolation by MOH must notify Supervisor immediately who then notifies Plant Management and RTWO/Supervisor. Worker MUST **self-isolate for 14 days** and strictly follow self-isolation guidelines of MOH. Worker must immediately advise RTWO or appropriate manager if Covid-19 test undertaken and disclose the test result. Worker is required to present full medical clearance to the RTWO or appropriate manager before they can return to work. Worker is also required to complete a health checklist. Supervisor identify "close contacts" (including address and phone numbers) for public health. Send workers in team home and tell them to self-isolate (stay home, avoid contact).
Workers who are part of team with worker with confirmed Covid-19, stay at home and self-isolate	RTWO or appropriate manager telephones workers in team who are "close contacts" (i.e. have worked with 2 meters of sick worker) to advise them to stay home and self-isolate
Sick (all illness) reporting sick and call back to return to work	RTWO or appropriate manager phones worker on first day of absence to complete Ministry of Health (MOH) Covid-19 checklist (link below) by phone and determine process of return to work. If a standard absence (e.g., dental, sporting injury etc.) with NO Covid-19 symptoms experienced (fever, cough, shortness of breath or sore throat), worker to call RTWO or appropriate manager when fit and ready to return to work. All workers returning to work from sick leave must complete a health checklist prior to starting work. If health checklist raises concerns and/or worker is experiencing any Covid-19 symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath or sore throat) refer below process. Worker must remain home.

Identify higher-risk workers (those who are over 70, and/or have compromised immunity (i.e. respiratory illness, immune suppressant medications etc)

Workers over 70	Workers over 70 to be given the option to go home and a choice to utilise long service leave, annual leave or unpaid leave.
Workers with a known history of respiratory illness or compromised immunity	Workers to be given the option to go home or if possible placed on work at reduced contact. They will given the choice to utilise long service leave, annual leave or unpaid leave.
Pregnant Workers	Workers to be given the option to go home or if possible placed on work at reduced contact. They will given the choice to utilise long service leave, annual leave or unpaid leave.

Definitions

Use sanitisers to wipe or spray clean contact surfaces or high traffic touch points in non-processing areas.
- Surface disinfecting wipes e.g. Mediwipes / Azo-wipes / Sanitiser spray or equivalent;
- Sanitiser spray, gel or equivalent e.g. Sanicol
- Any sanitiser with a "Flash off" ingredient that doesn't leave a residue on the applied surface.

High risk area
High risk areas include:
- Doors / turnstiles
- Canteen table tops / chairs / microwave / toaster/pie warmers, tea/coffee facilities, and fridge doors
- Hand dryers / towel dispensers / vending machines
- Corridors
- Smoking areas
- Offices used by multiple people - desks, keyboards, door handles, window latches, etc
- Lockers
- Laundry / gear collection / Tuck shop benches and exteriors of food cabinets
- Toilet doors
- Hand basins
- Soap dispensers
- Sprayers
- Cutlery
- Hand rails (stairwells)
- Control panels/consoles, processing tablets, keypads, etc

High risk areas will be spray/wiped down between breaks and shift changes OR every 2 hours – whichever is soonest

Medium risk area
Medium risk areas include:
- Dry stores
- Exterior of plant pedestrian gates / hand rails
- Engineering workshop benches (particularly kiosks and contractor spaces)
- Maintenance tools.

Medium risk areas must be spray/wiped down daily.

Other considerations
- Additional people resource for sanitising
- Chemical availability and cleaning equipment
- PPE
- Regular restocking of tissue / hand sanitiser dispenser stations

Clothes and PPE
- Clothes and other personal gear is to be kept physically separate from other workers' clothes and personal gear.
- Wash hands before collecting and donning PPE.
- Face-masks need to be changed regularly and when wet/damp.
- Disposal/cleaning/laundering of PPE, including overalls, boots, etc, handled normally.

- Workers should be trained on correct use of face mask PPE and frequently reminded of protocols for use; including:
  - how to don and doff correctly which includes washing hands before and after use and ensuring all face masks are fitted correctly.
  - Do not touch the inside surface of face-masks
  - Dispose of masks that are wet, dirty or difficult to breathe through
  - If face-masks are to be reused, they must never be shared with another worker and should be stored correctly between use

Further information on PPE can be found at:
https://covid19.govt.nz/latest-updates/guidance-for-wearing-protective-equipment/

https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public/covid-19-face-mask-and-hygiene-advice

Close contacts
Close contact is people who
- live in the same household as an infected person;
- face-to-face within 2 meters for 15+ minutes of an infected person.

Casual contacts
A casual contact is someone who has had contact with a case but doesn't meet the criteria for a close contact. This could mean someone in the same work area away from the case. For example, they were only close to the person with COVID-19 for less than 15 minutes or were at the same place but not near them.

Return To Work Officer (RTWO)
This is a new and temporary position created in some processors to monitor any worker who calls in to work as being absent due to illness. Companies may use equivalent procedures for managing sick leave/absences.

The RTWO who will contact every employee who is off work sick to determine the symptoms of their illness. The RTWO will complete an over the phone screening checklist to determine whether any of the symptoms are Covid-19 related.

The RTWO also monitors by phone those people until they are symptom free and ready to return to work, they will then be advised of the return to work process which is another screening of symptoms and health checklists on site before being allowed to return to their working area.

Site Security
There have been warehouse break-ins. Companies should register the address of their sites/warehouses with the NZ Police so they are aware this is an essential service commercial site and can prioritise call-outs accordingly.

Shipping
NZTE are working with Air NZ, MFAT and others to secure some airfreight support by way of charter flights to key Air NZ destinations. Companies can register their requirements for airfreight at myfreight@nzte.govt.nz

Supplies of various resources
NZTE are building an online place where all the requests for equipment, staff, storage and other resources can be put. People can email marketplace@nzte.govt.nz with their request and NZTE will look to make the necessary introductions.

Supply chain
MFAT have set up a contact point for companies facing issues with the domestic supply chain. You can email MFAT on dom.supplychains@mfat.govt.nz

Food and Beverage Exporters
If there are specific market access/trade issues send them through to MIA and to Covid-19.Trade@mpi.govt.nz

Letter for workers to confirm that they are working in an essential industry
If stopped by the Police on their way to or from work, workers may need proof that they are working in an essential industry. Companies can provide a letter confirming their workers' status as essential services workers, and permitted to travel between their home and work.

Worker In Essential Services

Name_____ ,
Date of birth ___,____,___,

is employed at_____.

Their employment assists in the provision of essential for processing services. As part of this, they are required to travel between their home and the processing plant.

Should you need to verify that this person is legitimately required to travel between home and the processing site, please contact any of the people below:

Name	Position	Phone

Ministry of Health Checklist
https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/covid-19-triage-checklist-21mar2020.pdf