Agriculture Messaging

Agriculture’s workforce – including farmers, ranchers and our teams – are our greatest asset. During the COVID-19 outbreak, we want to do everything we can to keep you and your teams safe and healthy. Although the majority of cases reported by the Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services (DHSS) are in the St. Louis and Kansas City metro areas, rural Missouri plays a vital role in preventing the spread to our own communities. As we see details of Governor Parson’s Show Me Strong Recovery Plan unfold, it is important we remain vigilant to ensure a safe and gradual reopening of the state’s economy.

While social distancing practices have managed to slow the spread, new cases of COVID-19 continue to be reported both in the metro areas and throughout Missouri. As we travel, so too does the virus, and as a result we are seeing an upward trend in cases along the I-55, HWY 67, HWY 60 corridors. As of April 17, counties along these highways have reported a total of 232 confirmed cases of COVID-19.

For now, the state is monitoring the Southeast region for increased activity. To ensure there is not a further spike in cases, this is the time to remind everyone of the importance of social distancing, cleaning and sanitization and frequent handwashing.

You can play a part at your farm, ranch or agribusiness in preventing the spread of COVID-19:

- **Separate**: talk with teams about social distancing — they should remain six feet away from individuals as much as possible.
  - When you cannot remain six feet apart, make sure you are using a mask or face covering and wash your hands thoroughly.
  - Encourage your staff and their families to practice social distancing at home by not going out or interacting with others unless it is to get essential supplies or medical care.
  - Hang signage, which available in English, Spanish and Chinese, in breakrooms.
- **Cross train teams**: designate teams and keep those teams separated.
  - Also, consider cross training staff in the event one of your team members gets sick.
- **Succession planning**: ensure critical business functions (check writing, obtaining loans, etc.) can continue in the absence of a sick team member.
- **Identify symptoms**: know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough and shortness of breath) and be alert for symptoms in your team members, yourselves and your families.
- **PPE**: use personal protective equipment as appropriate and recommended by the CDC and DHSS.
- **Good hygiene**: encourage staff and families to practice good hand hygiene frequently.
  - Frequently wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based sanitizer.
  - Avoid touching your face (eyes, nose, and mouth) with unwashed hands.
- **Clean & disinfect**: encourage your staff and families to increase efforts to clean high-touch surfaces using one of these disinfectants.
  - High touch surfaces include breakrooms, showers, door knobs, gates, faucets, toilet handles, light switches, appliance handles (oven, microwave, and refrigerator) and phones, tablets, etc.
- **Use your resources**: check out available resources at Agriculture.Mo.Gov, USDA.gov and extension2.missouri.edu.

This content was developed with resources from the Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services, University of Missouri Extension and the Missouri Department of Agriculture.