

General Farm Operations And COVID-19

New Jersey's agricultural operations are an essential part of the state's economy and the crucial first step in providing fresh, healthy foods to residents.

As farmers adapt to the new reality brought on by the COVID-19, additional precautions can and should be taken to ensure that people coming onto New Jersey farms or those making deliveries and pick-ups to and from those farms do not bring the COVID-19 virus onto the farm property.

The following tips on protecting your farm have been gleaned from numerous sources, including the USDA, fellow members of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, the Centers for Disease Control and others.

Deliveries and General Operations

1. Identify a drop-off location for regular deliveries away from on-farm high traffic areas and housing. Drop-boxes are recommended and should be placed near the road, before on-farm entry.
2. Create specific instructions for drop-off deliveries and provide those instructions to vendors making deliveries to your farms, by sending them to vendors ahead of time, posting signage with the instructions at the farm entrance and practicing good social-distancing from delivery drivers.
3. Log all deliveries and on-farm entries and monitor/log you and your farm employees' travel.
4. Prepare your farm's workforce by providing proper handwashing and handling instructions in all appropriate languages; creating additional space for lodging and meals; advising employees exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms to stay home; and encouraging employees to observe all health warnings about avoiding large groups in their off-hours.
5. Sanitize and disinfect contact surfaces thoroughly and often, especially common areas.
6. Review your farm's Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) plans. Those plans already should contain effective steps to prevent food contamination and thus will help contain the spread of COVID-19. These written plans also will help those who may have to take

over safety operations from employees/managers who cannot come in to work due to being quarantined or needing to care for family members.

Farms Delivering Products to Customers

Many consumers are now seeking home delivery from farms of products they would otherwise purchase from their local supermarket or grocery. Concern over gathering in large groups has led to some consumers wanting to have food, including farm-fresh produce, delivered to their homes to avoid going to retail stores.

In general, the recommendations listed above for deliveries made to farms would be advisable to follow in the reverse direction if farmers are delivering products directly to consumers' homes. Especially advised are avoiding entering customers' homes and utilizing "contactless delivery", or leaving deliveries at the door for customers to retrieve.

The article at the below link gives a good overview of services that food retailers are using to deliver items to consumers' homes. These could apply equally to farmers who wish to avail themselves of such delivery services.

<https://www.supermarketnews.com/online-retail/coronavirus-fears-grow-delivery-operators-offer-contactless-options>