



## GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Gary W. Black, Commissioner

[www.agr.georgia.gov](http://www.agr.georgia.gov)

### Georgia Department of Agriculture COVID-19 Update

Whether you have a licensed meat facility, livestock market, or a “just-in-time” production system (e.g. commercial dairy, poultry, swine, or beef), the following points apply to you and your business.

1. The Georgia Department of Agriculture is dedicated to doing all we can to help mitigate the COVID-19 outbreak, through social distancing by having as many of our staff telework as often as they can, as directed by Governor Kemp; while continuing to fulfill our essential duties. Although staff may be teleworking, we are still “open for business” and we intend to continue to respond to inquiries and fulfill needs, as usual.
2. We are committed to continuing to support commerce and continuity of business to the best of our ability.
  - a. We plan to have inspectors in meat establishments inspecting meat every day, as we recognize that our licensed meat facilities cannot apply the mark of inspection if we are not there to inspect.
    - i. As such, please communicate any changes to your routine operating schedule to meat inspection staff as soon as possible.
    - ii. We want to be able to utilize resources as efficiently as possible during these uncertain times, so assuring that our inspection staff are assigned to establishments that are open and working is essential.
  - b. We will continue to conduct animal health inspections and market news reporting at livestock markets, as resources and directives allow.
    - i. Livestock Markets should be in communication with our Livestock and Poultry staff if there are any changes to your operations.
  - c. We will continue to investigate suspect or confirmed diseases that impact livestock and other species.
  - d. As COVID-19 progresses and more information is made public, GDA recognizes that additional action may be warranted resulting in the decreased number of staff able to perform duties. We will do everything within our power to fulfill our regulatory responsibility, but we encourage our licensed facilities to develop contingency plans in the event of a staff shortage. We vow to communicate any changes within our operating structure as soon as possible, if this were to occur.
3. We strive to keep our staff safe.
  - a. When our staff work in the field to fulfill essential functions, we will be equipping them with the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep themselves safe (e.g. hand sanitizer and gloves).
  - b. We have empowered each of our staff members to utilize PPE as they deem appropriate and/or leave a facility, if he or she arrives and observes someone at a facility that is visibly ill (whether an employee or a visitor).
    - i. To help prevent this from happening, we recommend that facilities follow CDC’s recommendations in having employees stay home if they have symptoms consistent with COVID-19.



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- ii. Meat Inspection regulations prohibit any person with an infectious disease from any operations which could result in product adulteration and the creation of insanitary conditions.
4. We strongly encourage the review of existing biosecurity plans, or development and implementation of a robust biosecurity plan, to help protect employees, businesses, and the industry as a whole.
5. We encourage food animal producers to review their continuity of business plans in the event that a portion of the supply chain for the industry is affected. Additional resources on this topic can be found at <http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Secure-Food-Supply/>.
6. We encourage visiting the CDC at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html> and the Georgia Department of Public Health at <https://dph.georgia.gov/novelcoronavirus>, for additional information regarding whether or not to proceed with a scheduled function or for additional resources on responding to COVID-19.

In this constantly evolving situation, you can find our contact information and additional resources at our website: <http://agr.georgia.gov/animal-industry-division.aspx>.