

COVID-19 Protocols at ISU Research Farms

Iowa State University has responded to the recent COVID-19 outbreak by developing policies that emphasize social distancing and safety of employees. University operations for classroom instruction and associated office activities have shifted to remote, work-at-home and on-line interactions.

University research policy emphasizes downsizing research efforts where feasible and stressing social distancing for continuing research efforts.

University research farms are unique for several reasons. The farms have livestock/animals, which require daily care, 7 days a week, without exception. In addition, preparation for the upcoming growing season involves daily seasonal activities of seed, soil and field preparations, crop pest management operations, orchard pruning, orchard and vineyard spraying, and related crop production activities. Depending on the season and duration of the pandemic, these operations will include planting, pesticide application, fertilizing, and potentially harvest. The farms also must care and maintain for facilities, machinery, grounds and land, in general. Remote data collection also is maintained at the farms, for example automated weather stations requiring maintenance.

All farm locations will post these COVID-19 protocols/precautions near the farm entrance and office entry door.

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General Policy

Face Coverings Required

- Effective July 1, face coverings and/or face shields will be required in classrooms, offices, and other areas where physical distancing is not possible. This is an adjustment from the original face covering policy.
- The primary goal of this guidance policy is the **health and safety of our individual farm staff**.
- The primary defense against infectious viral spread is **personal hygiene, social distancing**, and shelter-in-place. To ensure continuity of operations, where possible, regular duty will shift to a combination of 1) work at home, 2) only essential on-site farm work, and 3) farm work at safe distances.
- The secondary line of defense is **disinfection and material quarantine** to reduce risk of indirect transmission.
- Most research farm's staff are relatively small, and the majority of the workload allows for proper **social distancing**. Where possible, schedules will be developed to help **stagger work assignments and work locations for social distancing**. The farms that employ larger groups, it is imperative to stagger work assignments in space and time to allow for social distancing. If a necessary task requires two or more people to complete, they will implement safe distancing.
- Instructions for field work, facilities work, and animal care will be communicated by the farm superintendent.

Updated ISU Face Covering Policy 8/5/2020 <https://web.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/safety/COVID-19/fall/ISU%20COVID%20face%20covering%20policy.pdf>

Safe Distancing, Hand Washing, Disinfection, and Material Quarantining

- Recommended **social distancing is 6 to 10 feet apart**. This means **two people should not ride in the same farm truck, utility vehicle, or tractor; take two vehicles. Only one or two people should work in the farm shops, or other shared spaces, at the same time.**
- When possible, farm staff should be "**permanently**" assigned to specific work spaces (shops, labs, etc.), **trucks, tractors, utility vehicles, sprayers**, etc. The goal is to minimize direct contact between staff or contact with materials or surfaces by more than one person.
 - Space must be clearly marked to identify the assigned user. If you are unsure, check with farm superintendent before proceeding.
 - **Use only your assigned space or vehicle and sanitize before use.** Communicate with staff prior to any exceptions.
- Use **good hand washing procedures** even when you are the only assigned user.
- Notify the group when you start working and when you leave. **Make sure at least one person knows when and where you are working and can check on you.**

- **All staff will wash hands when they arrive daily, at each break, and when they leave at the end of the shift.** Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- **Daily disinfecting** is recommended for door handles and commonly touched surfaces such as toilet handles, tools, steering wheels and hand controls of vehicles/tractors, etc. (including farm equipment), and keyboards. A daily checklist is recommended. Treat all common spaces and items as contaminated.
 - Disinfect surfaces following best practices (70% alcohol or other approved disinfectants; be aware of contact time). Wipe surface with disinfecting wipe or spray with disinfectant and wipe with a paper towel. Allow surface to air dry for 10 minutes.
 - Wash hands immediately after disinfecting surfaces and after any potential exposure.
- All research teams should supplement typical janitorial cleaning with **additional sanitation** of work spaces and equipment.
- **Material quarantine:** If possible, quarantine all material, samples, and deliveries from outside sources for at least 4 days. (If refrigeration is required, treat material as contaminated and move to cold storage for quarantine period).

Facility Maintenance and Usage

- All farm facility use should be coordinated by the farm superintendent.
- In facilities where multiple groups and PIs have ongoing operations, coordinate with other groups to ensure appropriate **social distancing**.
- **No visitors, field days, or public events allowed.**

Travel

- For personnel who must travel in-state to perform their duties, social distancing guidelines will be followed. **If 2 or more people are traveling to the same work place, drive multiple vehicles.**
- All travel **out-of-state is strongly discouraged** and requires prior approval. Returning from out-of-state travel will require a 14-day self-isolation period.

Communication

- Communicate via text, phone and email to avoid direct contact.
- Check emails for changes and updates.
- Text, call, or email questions, concerns or problems.

What do to if someone becomes ill and was at the farm?

- Notify staff at farm you are ill.
- Shutdown farm for 1 day.
- Deep clean all areas.
- Ill (COVID-19) person may not come back until they have permission form from a health professional.