

Views from VanDeWalle

Brandy VanDeWalle, Extension Educator in Fillmore County

April 22, 2020

COVID-19 Ag Producer Best Management Practices

Spring is a busy time of year for our farmers and ranchers and this year is no different. What is different however is the impact that COVID-19 has had on our rural communities. With kids home and schooling from home, some farm/ranch spouses working from home or not able to work at all, the stress is very real for many. Those of us in agriculture know the work we do to produce food for the world is essential but be sure to take precautions to protect you and your family during these uncertain and unprecedented times.

Recently I came across an article written by Brian Van Der Ley, Veterinary Epidemiologist Extension Specialist with Nebraska Extension. He provided the following guidelines and recommendations that can be used to implement COVID-19 control in agricultural systems.

- Stay Informed
Follow federal, state, and local direction to reduce personal risk for contracting COVID-19 and to limit further transmission if you or your employees become infected. Stay informed at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov
- Make a written plan by addressing the following:
 - What are the essential activities of the operation? (Feeding, farm work, etc.)
 - Who is primarily responsible for completing those activities?
 - How those activities are accomplished? (What basic skills are needed for the activity)
 - Who is available to complete those tasks if the primary individual becomes unavailable?
 - How may essential activities have to be modified if primary individuals are unavailable?
 - Write down the plan in as much detail as possible and make team members aware of the plan to insure continuity of business if COVID-19 infections begin to have a direct impact that disrupts normal management channels. Consider worst case scenarios for this situation (e.g. all team members are in quarantine due to exposure) and how essential operations can continue (e.g. asymptomatic team members self-quarantine at the operation to continue operations) and the logistics required for that plan.
- Develop plans to separate the teams/family members/hired personnel to prevent transmission. Separate duties and use personal distancing of employees while at work and not at work. Examples – processing livestock, filling planters, brandings, etc.
- Hold Virtual Meetings
Consider conducting employee meetings virtually – ZOOM, FaceTime, others. If in person, follow CDC guidelines.
- Clean High Touch Areas
Limit use of common areas-use only with social distancing and hygiene guidelines going



into and coming out of high touch areas, like meeting rooms, common kitchens, common restrooms, sinks, refrigerators, etc.

- Clean and disinfect high touch areas frequently
 - Bleach may be used to disinfect surfaces, but the concentration is higher for COVID-19 than for everyday sanitation: 5 tablespoons bleach per gallon of water
 - Clean Vehicles, Tractors, Implements, and Tools.
 - Place hygiene supplies (hand sanitizer, disinfect and/or disinfectant wipes in equipment and other shared areas (e.g. shop). When changing operators/users – when entering and leaving or before and after use.
 - Disinfect hands using sanitizer.
 - Disinfectant all high touch areas (e.g steering wheel, control handles, door handles, syringes, etc.)
 - Consider disposable covers for porous surfaces like seats and other upholstered surfaces.
 - Allow for 3 hour down-time to allow virus to die in confined spaces (e.g. cabs), if possible.
- Communicate with People Coming to your Location (consultants, veterinarians, dealers, mechanics, etc.)
 - Set up appointments that include time, meeting place, and a plan for transmission control (social distancing, cleaning/disinfection, personal protective equipment, etc.)
 - Confirm that individuals are feeling well and have not traveled to high risk locations prior to departure for visit.
- Coordinate Delivery of Products and Inputs (feed, medicine, supplements, pesticides, others).
 - Develop non-contact delivery methods (e.g. drop off locations)
 - Wash hands after handling packaging, consider wearing gloves.
 - Consider disinfection of non-porous packaging.
 - For deliveries that require person-to-person interaction:
 - Develop physical reminders for social distancing (tape on floor, barriers, etc.)
 - Practice hand sanitizing/washing before and after interaction
 - Inventorying and back-up planning essential.
 - Identify essential supplies and consider increasing inventory
 - Develop contingency plans if essential supplies become unavailable

(Source: IANR News & author: Brian Van Der Ley, Veterinary Epidemiologist Extension Specialist with Nebraska Extension)