



CDQAP Quality Assurance Update - March 2020

Covid 19 and California Dairy Producers

By Dr. Michael Payne, UC Davis, School of Veterinary Medicine and Director, CDQAP

As California enters its second week of a state-wide [Stay-at-Home Order](#), our steadfast producers and processors continue to harvest and ship essential dairy nutrition. While producers are meeting the challenges with their characteristic courage and ingenuity, it's easy to become overwhelmed by the torrent of COVID-19 information flooding in from every outlet. The following provides some carefully selected information specifically for dairy farmers in California.

COVID-19 and Food Safety

Some dairy customers, neighbors and others may have questions. There is reassuring science explaining how typical dairy food safety precautions eliminate the virus. Iodine levels in teat-disinfectants, chlorine levels in CIP systems and of course [pasteurization temperatures](#) all inactivate the virus. These are just some of the reasons that the FDA, CDC and the European Food Safety Agency all say there is [no evidence](#) that COVID-19 virus is transmitted by food or food packaging. Additionally, it's also useful for our customers to know that animal coronaviruses aren't transferred between livestock and humans. Cattle cannot contract and transmit the COVID-19 virus to people any more than your dog could give you the K9 coronavirus that causes kennel cough.

Employee Travel

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has unequivocally identified agriculture as part of the state's critical infrastructure and that ag workers are [exempt from work travel restrictions](#). The Department of Homeland security (DHS) similarly recognizes those producing, processing and delivering food as [critical infrastructure workers](#) with unique responsibilities and privileges. With the current Stay-at-Home Order, some farm and processor employees have expressed concern they could be stopped, questioned and even fined while traveling to and from work. Western United Dairies has provided a document explaining and documenting an employee's status in a critical infrastructure industry. The template is available in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#) and can be kept in the employee's vehicle.



Employee Health

All dairymen want to protect the health of their employees and themselves while working during this outbreak. Prevention starts

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Johan H. Bartelink, 1934 – 2020



It was with deep sadness that we learned of the loss Johan Bartelink. A California dairy farmer for more than 50 years, Johan's life was filled with accomplishments and service. He may be best remembered for his passion to teach children about dairy

cows, wonderfully shown in this [video](#) from CMAB. Johan was one of CDQAP's longest friends and advisors; his dairy was one of the first twelve to be environmentally certified in the program. Our thoughts and prayers are with Nellie, his wife of 61 years, and his many children and grandchildren. Funeral services will be announced at a later date. In lieu of flowers, please send donations to his [American Legion Post](#).

Farm Security Alert

Activists announce more trespass plans

By Dr. Michael Payne, UC Davis, School of Veterinary Medicine and Director, CDQAP

The Rural Crime Prevention Task Force, [RCPTF](#), released an advisory this week warning that activists with Direct Action Everywhere (DXE) are planning to trespass onto farms as part of their "Cancel Animal Ag" campaign. Based on video footage posted on social media, there is credible concern that they are trespassing into barns and livestock operations.

In response to trespass on your facility, your immediate first action should be to contact your local sheriff's department, explaining you are concerned about your safety and that of your employees and livestock. If possible, capture images of the trespasser and their vehicles. Particularly during this epidemic, you or your employees should not approach the trespasser. Responding officers have arrest discretion, but producers can certainly request arrest under CA California's Penal Code section [602\(K\)](#). Arrest is more likely if the facility has been posted. More information on how to deal with activist and drone trespass is [available from CDQAP](#).



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with discussing COVID-19 with your employees, what it is and how they can keep themselves and their families safe. A useful tool to start those discussions is a one-page fact sheet for dairy employees, available from AITech in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#). The fact sheet's familiar guidance (social distancing, handwashing and self-quarantine) can be reinforced with [posters](#) from the Centers for Disease Control, CDC, available for download in both English and Spanish. Cornell Cooperative Extension also developed an excellent [guide](#) on addressing coronavirus on farms.

Employee breakrooms and bathrooms are potential areas for virus transfer. Keep restrooms stocked with disinfectants, soap and towels. Minimize congregation when possible and reasonable for your farm. When use of common areas is unavoidable, implement a regular disinfection program. For regular disinfection of surfaces commonly touched with ungloved hands, CDC has [extensive guidance](#). Commonly available household bleach (1/3rd cup per one gallon water) will be effective when other [approved disinfectants](#) are in short supply or prohibitively expensive. Never mix bleach with other cleaning products, especially those containing ammonia, as it can release dangerous chlorine gas.

According to [CDC guidance](#) employees showing up for work with symptoms (especially fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) sending a sick employee home is not a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. A comprehensive review of California [producer obligations](#) for their employees during the epidemic was developed by Western United Dairies legal affairs team. The majority of COVID-19 patients will show only mild to moderate symptoms and can be cared for at home using [CDC recommendations](#).

Relative to planning for disruptions of either supplies or labor, The Bovine Veterinarian published a short but excellent article titled [COVID-19: Veterinarian Offers 5 Things To Tell Your Clients To Do Now](#).

Inspections & Allied Industry

CDFA food safety inspections are an essential function in ensuring a safe food supply. While CDFA will continue their routine visits to dairy farms and processing plants, inspectors will be implementing [best practices](#) to protect themselves, producers and employees. Inspectors are following all industry standards including observance of biosecurity and hygienic practices, as well as wearing any protective gear a farm requires. These same precautions are similarly being implemented for inspections of meat processing plants and slaughter facilities. CDFA also recognizes rendering as an essential service vital to public health and safety and has provided [supporting documentation](#) for the industry.

Auction markets are also considered part of agriculture's critical infrastructure and are typically staying open for business. Individual auctions however may implement a variety of protective strategies ranging from altering café service, limiting the number of buyers or having consignors deliver livestock and return home rather than remaining at the facility. Producers with market cows should contact their auction yard beforehand for specific changes.

Discarded Milk

Although no producers we know of are anticipating milk pick-ups being halted, some dairy processors are beginning to develop contingency plans in the event that a plant's production needs to be slowed or stopped. Such circumstances might include labor shortages, decreased demand from restaurants and schools, loss of international markets, etc. In the event that milk is stranded and requires on-farm disposal the Central Valley Regional Water Board has [provided guidance](#).

Other Resources

A number of organizations and agencies have developed coronavirus webpages. Perhaps the most exhaustive [dairy-related page](#) is from the National Milk Producers Federation. For producers looking for just the highlights, NMPF's [coronavirus handbook](#) is only three pages long but dense with information. Pennsylvania's Center for Dairy Excellence is another [frequently updated site](#). Closer to home, in the interest of public safety, UC Agriculture & Natural Resources (ANR) meetings have been canceled, postponed or converted to on-line through April 30. UC Cooperative Extension and your farm advisors are still available by email or phone. The California Dairy Research Foundation is still generating critical information for producers and answering phones and emails. Producers with COVID-19 questions for UCD or CDQAP are encouraged to contact Dr. Michael Payne at 530-304-9306 or mpayne@ucdavis.edu.