

CORONAVIRUS

Preparedness for banana businesses

(This information is current as at 2 April, 2020)

As the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic evolves, it is advisable that growers implement measures to reduce the impact of coronavirus on your workforce.

This starts with understanding terms used by the Health Authorities and Government.

Confirmed case: A person who tests positive to a validated test.

After seeking medical attention, the person must remain **isolated** until health authorities inform them it is safe for them to return to their usual activities.

Close contact: A close contact is defined as someone who:

- has had more than 15 minutes of face to-face contact (in any setting) with a person with confirmed coronavirus (including in the 24 hours before their symptoms appeared)
- has shared a closed space (e.g. office or sealed room) with a person with confirmed coronavirus for more than two (2) hours (including in the 24 hours before their symptoms appeared).

Workers who may have been in close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus, are required to **self-quarantine** for 14 days.

Self-quarantine means staying at home, in a motel room or provided accommodation, and not leaving for the period required to quarantine. Only people who usually live in the household should be in the home. Do not allow visitors into the home.

Casual contact is someone who has been in the same general area as a person who has tested positive for coronavirus while infectious. You are a casual contact if:

- You have had less than 15 minutes face-to-face contact (in any setting) with a confirmed case (including in the 24 hours before their symptoms appeared).

Casual contacts do not need to be excluded from work while well.

Measures to reduce the impact of coronavirus on your workforce

The following measures are advised for banana farm businesses.

Being able to demonstrate how hygienic and social distancing measures are implemented in the workplace will assist in mitigating the impacts of confirmed coronavirus cases within the workforce. This may also reduce the number of staff who may need to be removed from the normal workstream.

Documentation also provides a body of evidence to inform any discussions with the health department regarding isolation or deployment of individuals within a business's workforce.

Health & Hygiene

- Strict adherence to hygienic procedures, with an increased focus on effective cleaning routines, contact surfaces, equipment, tools and facilities:
 - increased surveillance of hygiene effectiveness;
 - review to ensure sufficient access to hand washing and hygiene stations; and

- cleaning and sanitising of packing shed and equipment, particularly high-contact areas including lunchrooms, smoking areas and bathrooms.
- Appropriate use and disposal of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Ensure a “fit for work” policy to prevent site access by staff who may place the business at risk.
- Measures that may also be considered include documented coronavirus training, and a temperature recorded health check prior to work.

Social distancing

- Maximise distance between employees, especially where close contact is not necessary:
 - where possible maintain social distancing, however where distancing is not possible for all employees, identify worker teams where close contact will occur and segregate worker teams by time or space based on close-contact likelihood. This includes during work activities as well as during meal breaks, smoking breaks, travel, accommodation and work-place socialisation;
 - maintaining social distancing in the absence of effective hygiene practices may not prevent the spread of this virus, especially in common areas of the workplace such as change rooms, lunchrooms and other amenities;
 - facilities must be vigilant in their hygiene practices, including frequent and proper hand-washing and routine cleaning of all surfaces; and
 - workers should adhere to community guidance for social distancing outside of work to support these measures.
- Minimise rotation or movement of staff through different work areas to keep close contacts to a known network including meal and smoko breaks (this will assist with contact tracing).
- Where feasible, split the workforce into smaller teams or groups to reduce the number of workers impacted if a case of coronavirus occurs.
- Stagger or increase time between shifts to minimise unnecessary interactions between workgroups and eliminate bottlenecks (e.g. at foot bath or carpark). Gaps between shifts can also provide a window for cleaning between work cohorts.
- Restrict face-to-face meetings.

Education

- Educate staff on the process that will be followed if they need to be excluded from work as result of being identified as a confirmed case or close contact, as well as the process for returning to work. This may include discussion of job security or leave arrangements. The aim is to encourage staff self-reporting of suspected illness.
- Growers/managers to identify workers with symptoms of illness (particularly respiratory) for exclusion from work.

- Distribution of information from authorities to heighten staff awareness of the importance on implementing controls to prevent coronavirus spread.

The business will also need to consider their policy or required actions when a staff member or the health department advise that a positive detection has occurred.

This will include, where relevant:

- transport from the site to appropriate accommodation or health facility;
- contact tracing of potentially impacted staff; and
- increased hygiene and cleaning of surfaces, equipment and break rooms, toilets and hygiene stations which may have been used or accessed by the staff member while infectious.