

To: Food Business Operators

Re: Plant Operating Guidelines in line with Social Distancing Recommendations

In these challenging times, we must now take steps to prioritise personnel and team safety, doing as much as we can to protect public health. I am writing to share some instructions that we have developed to help protect the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of our teams whilst in your premises. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the proactive measures already implemented by some plants.

These instructions have been developed using both advice from '[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): business and social distancing guidance](#)' and experience from food industry, to identify practical ways in which you can provide a safe working environment at this time. They are intended to supplement the [COVID-19 Information and Guidance for non-healthcare settings published by Health Protection Scotland](#) and '[Guidance for employers and businesses on coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)' which is available on the Gov.uk website, by describing the specific actions that should be taken to ensure social distancing requirements are followed in plants.

You are asked to provide FSS with a written Social Distance protocol covering any areas where FSS staff on site could be impacted.

First Steps - Avoid contact with someone displaying symptoms. What steps should you take?

- If you are made aware of anyone displaying symptoms of COVID-19, immediate action should be taken to remove them to a pre-arranged isolation room, isolate them and send them home.
- Staff should know that anyone experiencing symptoms should self-isolate immediately. They should then be sent home in personal transport.
- If anyone has self-isolated and they are returning to work, they must have self-isolated for 7 days from when the symptoms started. If they have been in contact with anyone with symptoms, they must self-isolate for 14 days. This should be communicated to staff, checked and verified as part of the return to work procedures.
- Staff and visitors to site, including delivery drivers, should be asked to complete a declaration which specifically refers to absence of COVID-19 symptoms.
- Define routes for delivery drivers and contractors to minimise contact with staff.
- All non-essential external visitors should be prohibited.

Good Hygiene – what do we need you to do?

- The need for good hand hygiene and social distancing should be effectively communicated across the site. [Posters, leaflets and other materials are available online.](#)
- You must provide hand sanitiser and tissues as well as access to hot water, suitable soap and paper towels at every entrance and exit to food production or work area.
- Staff should wash their hands and use sanitiser after using computers, phones, door handles etc. in addition to the regular handwashing. This should be signposted accordingly.
- Staff should effectively wash and sanitise their hands whenever they have been in contact with other surfaces found across the site and regularly throughout the day.
- Bins must be provided for disposal of used paper towels / tissues, and these must be used.
- Communal areas should be cleaned and disinfected frequently.

Avoid gatherings. What do we need you to do?

Communal Areas

- Communal areas such as rest rooms and canteens should be organised so that social distancing is possible. If not, then staff should use their cars for breaks or be provided access to other areas where social distancing can be observed such as offices.
- Where there are on site canteens, employees should be encouraged to bring their own food and catering teams move to a take away system.
- All communal areas including corridors, smoking areas etc. should have a system to control the number of people using it at any one time e.g. using a rota or staggering breaks. Consider allowing workers longer break time to reach a break area to avoid crowding.

Production Areas

Where production lines are arranged such that personnel are working more closely together, such as slaughter lines or cutting plants, then appropriate distancing must be implemented. Reduced staffing levels may be a consequence of steps required to protect staff.

You should consider:

- Running the line slower, for longer
- Empty lines at breaks to assist with staggering breaks to reduce congestion in wash areas
- If lines stop during production do not allow staff to congregate in groups
- Where possible, mark social distancing spaces so they are clearly identifiable

- Moving certain tasks to different locations where practical
- Reducing resource requirement where possible by consolidating inspection points to reduce staff in one working location
- Physical segregation where possible (e.g. Perspex panels to segregate workstations - remember, they need to be cleanable)
- Staggered use of and additional changing facilities where possible, and additional cleaning and disinfection in these facilities
- Maintain 2m distancing in wash areas particularly at the end of break times in wash areas or other sites where congestion is common and air moisture content is high
- Any on site retail establishment should put controls in place that adhere to social distancing i.e. 2m apart.

Face Masks – Are they required?

Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) - face masks - are only being recommended in clinical settings for example NHS work. Stocks of RPE should continue to be saved for the work where the wearing of RPE is mandatory (TB reactor / contact cattle and for work in poultry lairage areas).

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must continue to be worn as required, in line with normal guidelines.

Communicate and Stay Informed

This is a fluid situation and the official guidance from [Scottish Government](#), and [NHS Inform](#) changes frequently – make sure you keep yourself and staff on site up to date.

Keep in touch with your local FSS Management Team and let us know if there is something to report and we'll do the same.

Thank you for your cooperation with these guidelines, and for continuing to work with us to help maintain food supply during this difficult time.

Ian McWatt

Deputy Chief Executive