

People need to be fed, and it's up to us

As we head into a new week, there are new realities of fighting the coronavirus SARS-CoV2 together. What are practical perspectives we have from the lens of our farming experiences to be able to control our anxiety and focus more on disciplines that we know work. We do this daily in some way to protect our livestock with biosecurity protocols.

Farmers come from a world where "shower in - shower out" protocols in swine and poultry breeding farms is routine, where disposable work wear is a normal practice for visiting poultry farms, and where dairies understand the importance of sanitation on calf health. Personal hygiene in hand washing and 'social separation' is a similar protocol we easily understand to practice. We do this daily in some way to protect our livestock with biosecurity protocols.

There is no evidence that COVID-19 coronavirus spreads from animals to humans. We do deal with coronavirus diarrheas and pneumonias in calves and cows. There are coronavirus vaccines on some farms, but these are different (viruses) and do not spread nor cross-protect.

To answer many on farm questions, here is a collective summary that we hope is practical:

A. About COVID-19. It is now known to be highly contagious. It has a higher fatality rate than other respiratory viruses. It passes as respiratory droplets that can be inhaled directly, or land on surrounding objects and be picked up first by hand contact, and then passed on by touching ones' eyes, nose or mouth. It is an RNA virus, so it needs to find a live cell to replicate. This virus enters through the eyes, nose or mouth and, once it gets into the lungs, it hijacks the ACE2 receptor in the alveolar cells in the lung air sacs, and uses those cells to replicate. This causes an inflammatory reaction and ongoing fibrosis that clogs the airways and damages the cells, together making it difficult to breathe, preventing oxygen exchange, and ultimately the body is not able to supply oxygen to vital organs.

There is no way to stop the virus from spreading if we do what we normally do daily. We need to stop the person to person transmission, and we do this the same way as taking care of our animals. We improve sanitation by washing often, and we decrease stocking density - we physically separate.

B. Here is some practical advice and some references for the farm team:

Here is a practical list to safeguard your body and your team health:

- 1.** Wash your hands after any contact or movement using a foaming soap. Do this for 20 seconds and wash your hands thoroughly. In the barn, everyone already wears latex gloves for milking; expand it for other tasks, and wash up thoroughly before entering your homes.
- 2.** Regularly wash down surfaces that people use in common. This includes counters, keyboards, mouses, pens, steering wheels and skidsteer controls, etc.
- 3.** Physical separation includes talking with standing meetings and step back another yard/meter. They are efficient too:-). At coffee and lunch times, have designated mugs and wipe down all surfaces before and after eating.

4. When returning to the house, be intentionally careful. The virus attaches itself to hands, hair and clothes. Any detergent or soap kills it, so take a shower when you get in from the barn, and remove clothes that were in contact with the outside world. Avoid sitting down anywhere and go straight to the shower.

5. Focus on your health - flu, colds and overworking fatigue will weaken your immune system. The coronavirus has the ability to evade and suppress the immune system, so protect yours. Eat well. Stay hydrated. Eat fruits and vegetables. Get a good night's sleep.

6. Don't smoke. Or vape. You know this; it's not good for your lungs.

7. On the farm, focus on the weakest links of your staff's behaviors and movements. Who goes to extended family on the weekend? If one person puts themselves at risk, everyone in the unit is at risk. Educate and set high standards. Everyone returning from out-of-country gets 14 days self-isolation; everyone. One positive case may force the whole milking team to be off for 14 days - can you afford that?

8. Some good resources:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddIRvqhGdPk&feature=emb_rel_end

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19>

<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-teachers-can-talk-children-about-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

C. Taking care of YOU, so you can take care of others.

1. This is going to get worse, so keep things in perspective. Control that which is in your control to control. And in other things, don't be anxious but trust in your Creator (Philippians 4:6,7; Matthew 6:25-34).
2. Get the facts, trust in the plan for farm and family, and communicate with your children and extended family. See unicef link above.
3. Maintain work/life balance by focussing on the positives of this new lifestyle for your family and work team.
4. Stay in regular contact with friends/family, and use technology creatively to do this. If you are isolated, don't be alone.
5. Regulate your news media monitoring, especially TV news. Stay informed, then read more. Include something for your soul.
6. Good antidotes to adversity are regularly making a blessings list, and sharing kindness and compassion to all.
7. If your mental health puts yourself or others at risk, call someone and talk. You are not alone.

Remember, in these times, food production is essential. That means you, your employees, and your farm are all essential to Canada's ability to overcome this obstacle. Thanks for everything you are doing to ensure this. Take care of yourself and pass this information along if you wish. This is information that you can use to protect yourself and your families.

be kind  **be safe**

www.TogetherWeAreAnimalCare.ca