

Business Resumption in Alberta

Intergovernmental protocol in the event of a confirmed COVID-19 worker in provincial or federal-licensed facilities

Background and Context

Maintaining a safe and accessible food supply for Albertans is one of the top priorities of the provincial government throughout the pandemic response. As such, both the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada have identified businesses that process food as an essential service, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is playing a lead role in understanding and responding to potential supply chain disruptions in Alberta.

Food and beverage manufacturing is Alberta's second largest manufacturing sector, including 65-70% of the beef processing industry in Canada. Food inspection oversight in Alberta is provided by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), Alberta Health Services (AHS) and Agriculture and Forestry (AF). AF has statutory obligations under the provincial *Meat Inspection Act* and *Meat Inspection Regulation*, as well as the *Dairy Industry Act* and *Dairy Industry Regulation*, and regulates 115 provincially licensed abattoirs, 113 mobile butchers, 42 mobile butcher facilities and 14 dairy processing facilities. AHS regulates over 25,000 food establishments under the provincial *Public Health Act* and *Food Regulation*. CFIA regulates approximately 74 food animal slaughter, meat processing and meat storage establishments and provides inspection services to these facilities under the *Safe Food for Canadians Act* and *Safe Food for Canadians Regulation*. Each play an important role as a regulator, in addition to the primary role of Alberta Health Services to assess and mitigate public health risk. Labour and Immigration regulates the safety of workers on Alberta work sites under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, Regulation and Code.

Objective

The objective of this protocol is to outline the roles and responsibilities of CFIA, AHS and AF and to serve as a communication tool in cases of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the food facilities mentioned above. Good communication among all parties will help avoid or minimize the time to business resumption following the identification of a COVID-19 positive worker in a provincially or federally-licensed facility.

Scope

This protocol applies to the context of business resumption following a confirmed COVID-19 facility employee or regulator who worked in the facility. This protocol should also be followed if any party is notified by a facility that a third-party service provider tested positive for COVID-19.



This protocol does not override any internal organizational policies and procedures and legislative authorities and obligations. This protocol supplements orders issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health under the *Public Health Act*.

Critical Success Factors

This protocol is dependent on the following factors aimed to prevent the risk of COVID-19 to individuals within a facility, which may also minimize the time it takes for a food processing plant to resume business operations:

- Facilities develop and implement mitigation measures consistent with orders and guidance from the Public Health Agency of Canada and the provincial Chief Medical Officer of Health, and local Public Health Authority to minimize risk of exposure to COVID-19, including employee health assessments, physical distancing, enhanced cleaning and disinfecting regimens, and emergency response plans that consider business continuity and employee safety.
- Facilities educate the workforce on monitoring health symptoms, reporting requirements and changes to operational procedures. Requirements for self-isolation and other guidance as provided by the provincial Chief Medical Officer of Health, and local Public Health Authority must be incorporated.
- Facilities abide by advice and direction provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada, provincial Chief Medical Officer of Health, and local public health authorities in mitigating and responding to a confirmed COVID-19 employee.
- Government and industry commit to sharing information and responding in an open and transparent manner. Facilities make information available to AHS, AF, and CFIA as applicable so that they can take appropriate measures.

Guiding Principles

The following principles are guiding principles in responding to a confirmed COVID-19 facility employee or regulator who worked in the facility:

- People first. Decisions related to business resumption in the event of a COVID-19 positive employee should be based, first and foremost, on the ability to protect public health.
- No one size fits all protocol. The time to business resumption will vary from facility-to-facility and is dependent on a variety of factors including, but not limited to, the potential exposure to other workers, facility-specific operations, and the number of COVID-19 positive workers.
- Transparent communication. Open and honest communication among the facility, regulator and public health authority will enable faster decision making.

Procedure

1. Pre-emptive Mitigation

Meat processing plants must implement measures to prevent the spread of infection. A company must implement all mitigation and cleaning requirements and adjust their work schedule accordingly. AHS



will support requests to provide information and guidance regarding risk mitigation protocols and recommend additional measures that could be taken to further minimize public health risks. CFIA and AF will collaborate in each zone as a shared learning/understanding opportunity.

2. Notification of Confirmed COVID-19 Positive Workers

AHS will assess case contacts. As part of this process, the case and employer are interviewed to determine potential close contacts to mitigate the spread of the virus.

AHS will notify the regulator in the event of a confirmed positive associated with a provincially or federally licensed facility to assist in the assessment and response to mitigate risk. Information will be shared between the applicable parties as soon as possible, so that decisions can be made regarding measures that need to be implemented or other possible actions under their responsibility.

In the event notification is provided mid-operations, AHS is of the position that the facility will be able to continue operations to end of shift providing operations pose no added health risk to workers. This is in an effort to complete shift runs to facilitate cleaning and disinfection protocols and manage potential animal welfare issues.

3. Risk Assessment

AHS will lead the epidemiological assessment with cooperation from industry, the inspection authority, and/or other government officials. The assessment will include, but not be limited to:

- Determination of location(s) and days the employee worked in the facility.
- Determination of people traffic flow and close contacts.
- Completion of cleaning and sanitation protocols.

In the event of a potential or imminent decision of plant closure, AHS will notify all parties and communications will be coordinated.

4. Business Resumption

Employees in Alberta are currently legally required to follow self-isolation requirements when tested positive for COVID-19. AHS will offer support to facility management, the inspection authority and impacted staff where there is a requirement for individuals to self-isolate and/or seek medical attention.

AHS will provide formal notification to the facility on what operations within the plant can safely resume and provide the “all clear” to return to full operations. Decisions will be made in consultation with facility management.

Communication

In the event that organizational public announcements or media communications occur, they will be coordinated across AF, CFIA and AHS, as well as industry where appropriate.



AF communications will maintain regular contact with AHS and CFIA communications teams to ensure timely sharing of information and approvals.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1: Organizational Contact List

Guidance to Meat Slaughter and Processing Establishments on Prevention and Response to Suspect and Confirmed COVID-19 Plant Employees – CFIA

The following Parties are in agreement of this protocol, which is dependent on the Chief Medical Officer of Health's Policies and Directives related to public health and which may be amended or updated from time to time during the COVID-19 response as agreed to by all of the Parties:

On behalf of the
Canadian Food Inspection Agency



Kelvin Mathuik, Director General
Western Operations

April 14, 2020
Date

On behalf of
Alberta Agriculture and Forestry



David Burdek, ADM
Processing, Trade and
Intergovernmental Relations Division

April 14/20
Date

On behalf of
Alberta Health Services



Mark Fehr, Executive Director
Safe Healthy Environments

April 14/20
Date

