



GUIDELINES FOR INDUSTRY

# COVID-19 and your Workforce

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Version 2

THOROUGHBRED  
BREEDERS

*Australia*

## **DISCLAIMER**

This document has been developed to provide general guidance to assist thoroughbred breeders to plan for and mitigate the risks posed by COVID-19 to their employees, their business, and animal welfare. It is not to be used for any other purpose or made available to any other party, except your partners or advisors, without prior written consent from Thoroughbred Breeders Australia (TBA).

While care has been taken preparing this guide it does not constitute legal advice. In particular, the protocols that are suggested to be followed in the event of a member of your workforce being confirmed positive for COVID-19 are TBA recommendations only. They do not constitute official advice. You must heed any advice and directions given by public health officials.

Be aware that the situation is changing rapidly, and that these guidelines may need to be revised in the light of developments.

## OVERVIEW

These guidelines have been prepared to assist the thoroughbred breeding industry to prepare for and manage the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak.

They are designed as prompts to consider strategies aimed at:

- Protecting the health and safety of your employees, their families and the broader community.
- Facilitate, as far as possible, business continuity, thereby ensuring:
  - **That the welfare of the horses for which you are responsible is not jeopardised.**
  - **Ongoing job security for your workforce.**

## KEEP YOUR WORKFORCE REGULARLY INFORMED AND ENGAGED

- Brief all employees and contract staff, including cleaning staff, on the risks and other information relevant to COVID-19 and provide advice as to what they need to do to protect themselves and prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Provide regular updates.

### About COVID-19

1. You get COVID-19 from people, not from horses.
2. Current evidence suggests that the main way the virus spreads is by respiratory droplets among people who are in close contact with each other.
3. The Delta variant of COVID-19 is considered more contagious and more resistant to health controls and preventions, than previous strains of the virus.
4. People may be highly infectious before their symptoms show. Even people with mild or no symptoms can spread COVID-19.
5. Infection is most likely to be spread by:
  - **Direct close contact with someone who is actively infected.**
  - **Close contact with a person with a confirmed infection when they cough, sneeze, speak, sing or breathe heavily.**
  - **Touching objects or surfaces contaminated with mucus/droplets from a cough or sneeze from an infectious person and then touching your nose, mouth or face.**

### Key messages

1. Maintaining physical distancing (staying 1.5m apart) where possible, wearing a face mask (especially if you can't maintain 1.5m distancing), and practicing good hand and cough/sneeze hygiene is the best defence against the spread of COVID-19.
2. Both at home and at work, you should:
  - **Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet.**
  - **Wear a mask as officially mandated, cover your coughs and sneezes (for example, with a clean tissue, or into your elbow), dispose of tissues, and use alcohol-based hand sanitizer after.**
  - **Avoid touching your face, especially your mouth, nose, and eyes.**
  - **Get tested at the first sign of symptoms and self-isolate until you get a negative result.**

If you want further information on COVID-19, call the National Coronavirus and COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on **1800 020 080**. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require interpreting services, call **131 450**.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO PREVENT THE INTRODUCTION AND SPREAD OF COVID-19

Minimise the number of close contacts each worker is exposed to

✓ Consider ways of limiting the opportunity for contact between workers on different shifts/different areas of the farm.

✓ Consider other ways of minimising the number of immediate close contacts each employee might be exposed to in the course of their working day.

- Are there ways that contact between different 'teams' working on the farm can be minimised? Or intermingling of members from different work groups be reduced?
- Minimise the number and duration of face-to-face meetings.
  - **Where possible, stop face-to-face meetings altogether, and any essential meetings should be restricted to 15 minutes. Wear face masks if possible.**
- Identify staff and roles that may be able to work remotely/from home.
- Encourage employees who work in 'teams' that are in close contact with each other, to try and limit the number of different people they work with directly.
- Ask employees to avoid congregating in other areas outside the workplace.

## Facilitate adoption of good hand health hygiene practices and mask wearing

### ✓ Ensure good hand hygiene and mask wearing practices are promoted and facilitated.

- Conduct training of staff in effective hand washing technique.
- Provide adequate hand washing amenities (including alcohol-based hand rub) for staff to use in all common areas and staff facilities.
- Encourage staff to wear masks where appropriate.
- Provide masks for staff in all indoor settings and other situations where physical distancing (1.5m apart) is difficult to maintain. For example: the covering shed, foaling huts, vet crushes.

## Restrictions on farm access

### ✓ Implement more stringent access requirements for those entering the farm.

- No entry for non-essential visitors.
- Ensure you are complying with your state or territory contract tracing requirements ie. QR code check-ins.
- Consider a mask-wearing policy for essential visitors and contractors.
- Require confirmation from any essential visitors and contractors that they haven't been in a COVID-19 hotspot or government declared red zone in the last 14 days.

## Advise staff of their responsibilities if they are, or think they could be, infected

### ✓ Ensure staff know what the symptoms of COVID-19 are.

## Symptoms

- **Fever** (37.5 degrees celsius or above)
- **A cough**
- **Sore throat**
- **Shortness of breathe**
- **Runny nose**
- **Loss of taste and/or smell**

**Other reported symptoms of COVID-19 include fatigue, acute blocked nose (congestion), muscle pain, joint pain, headache, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting and loss of appetite.**

**Unexplained chest pain and conjunctivitis have also been reported as symptoms of COVID-19.**

✓ Advise staff of what they need to do if they experience symptoms that may indicate infection.

## Key Messages

- If you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms, even in their mildest form, you should not come to work. Get tested immediately and self-isolate until you receive a negative result.
- Advise your company as soon as possible after you develop symptoms, including when precisely you believe you may have started exhibiting symptoms.
- If you experience these symptoms while at work, please report to your supervisor/ manager immediately.
- Do not travel on public transport or attend any public places.
- Advise your company of the outcome of any medical investigation of your condition (for example, the results of your COVID-19 test). You should do this as soon as possible.
  - **Don't return to work until your situation has been resolved.**
  - **Don't come to work while you are waiting for a test result.**
  - **Provide evidence that you're OK to return to work, before reporting for work.**
- Don't come in to work if you are a close contact of someone outside the workplace, who has confirmed COVID-19.
- Adhere to all instructions given by medical authorities.
- If you have been required to be in home isolation (for example, if you are a close contact of someone with COVID-19) and have completed your 14 day isolation period without showing signs or symptoms of being unwell, you should still consult your relevant state or territory health advice before returning to work and ensure you are complying with their procedures.
- You should ask your employees before the commencement of the workday if they are unwell or experiencing any of the above symptoms and seek their confirmation that they are not.
- If a supervisor/manager identifies an employee that is exhibiting relevant symptoms, they should ask the employee to go home and follow the above guidelines.
- Remember that your employees' medical records are confidential and you must not disclose to co-workers the medical status of any individual.

## Cleaning and disinfection

**✓ Ensure cleaning and disinfection practices are optimised and rigorously adhered to.**

- Consider stepping up the cleaning programs.
- Consider whether the following [Australian Government guidelines for cleaning](#) add anything to your standard procedures for cleaning and disinfection of the premises.
- Guidelines for cleaning staff can also be found on page 2 of these Australian Government guidelines.
- Increase the cleaning and disinfection of staff common areas (lunch rooms, bathrooms etc).
- Clean/disinfect frequently touched surfaces, equipment and machinery on the premises (handrails, door handles, gate latches, motorbike handles, steering wheels, buckets, head collars, grooming items etc) with detergent solution.
- Pay particular attention to cleaning stainless steel and plastic surfaces, as the virus can stay viable on these materials for up to 2-3 days.
- Undertake a thorough review of your entire facility to identify areas/surfaces/equipment that may have been inadvertently overlooked in your existing cleaning program, or which perhaps were not so relevant prior to the pandemic, but becomes so in the context of COVID-19. Put a treatment program in place to address any deficiencies found.

## Reduce the chances of illness and mis-diagnosis

**✓ Encourage all your staff to get the seasonal flu vaccination (better still, provide vaccination for them).**

- Flu vaccination does not provide protection from COVID-19, but it will reduce the potential for flu being mistaken for COVID-19, which could cause undue alarm and disruption in the workplace.



✓ **Communicate to your staff that a COVID-19 vaccine is now available.**

- COVID-19 vaccines have proven very effective at minimising the impact of the disease, as well as decreasing the chances of catching or passing on the virus. Staff should be encouraged to speak to a GP or health professional about getting the vaccine.
- [More information on the vaccine can be found here.](#)

## Protocols in the event of an employee confirmed to be infected with COVID-19

**In the absence of clear direction from Health Departments with respect to the protocol to be followed in the event of a member of workforce being confirmed positive for COVID-19, TBA has developed the following suggested protocols. They do not constitute official advice. You must heed any advice and directions given by public health officials.**

✓ **Close contacts of confirmed infected employees should be advised to self-isolate immediately.**

### **What is ‘close contact’?**

**A close contact is someone who has been close to a person with infectious COVID-19, for any period of time, and might have become infected with the COVID-19 virus.**

### **If you are a close contact**

- Immediately isolate, even if you feel well and aren't experiencing any symptoms.
- Get tested as soon as possible at your nearest testing clinic. Avoid public transport, taxi and ride-share transport - walk, cycle or use a private vehicle. Wear a face mask and immediately notify staff at the testing clinic that you have been identified as a close contact.
- Notify people near you that you have been identified as a close contact. Instruct them to get tested immediately and self-isolate until they receive a negative result. Examples include people you share a house with and everyone you have spent significant time with over the past three days.
- Employees who feel they are at higher risk due to age (65 and over) or who have an underlying medical condition, such as diabetes, respiratory issues or heart disease, should be allowed (but not required) to stay home, as a precaution.
- [More information on isolation can be found here.](#)

## What do you do if an employee reports sick with COVID-19 symptoms, but is not yet confirmed to be infected?

### ✓ Be prepared to identify close contacts quickly.

- Pull together records of who the employee had close contact with over the few days prior to developing symptoms.
- Keep good records of who has worked where, when and with whom, so that you can quickly identify who may or may not have had close contact with a potentially infected staff member.
- Implement a system for recording who each employee has had close contact with (as defined above) in the course of each shift/workday.
  - **Electronic staffing records, supplemented by records captured by supervisors, may meet these requirements.**
  - **Consider supplementary approaches, such as providing employees with a log book, to be completed at home each night, or sheets to be completed at the end of each shift/workday and left on departing the farm/office in which they record all personnel who they were in close contact with in the course of their shift.**
- Importantly, this should include who they had contact with during breaks or at the beginning and end of the shift/workday.

## Preparing for return to work

### ✓ Someone who has completed official quarantine or has been released from isolation does not pose a risk of infection to other people.

- People who have been required to be in home isolation and have completed their 14 day period, are not showing signs or symptoms of being unwell, and who have followed the instructions of their relevant state or territory health officials, are permitted to return to their daily activities including going to work.
- Where staff have been infected with COVID-19 but have recovered, it will be important to reassure their work colleagues that their reintroduction into the workplace is safe.
- You should encourage employees to continue physical distancing, mask wearing and good hygiene practices, both in the workplace and at home, to help stay free of illness.

## CONTINGENCY ARRANGEMENTS

### Suppliers/Services

✓ **Consider what supplies and services may be disrupted and options that may minimise disruption to availability.**

- Consider supplies and availability of PPE, sanitisers, cleaning agents.
  - **Investigate potential alternative suppliers.**
- Consider supplies and availability of key farm and/or office supplies/ equipment, particularly if reliant on suppliers from countries seriously impacted by COVID-19.
  - **Investigate potential alternative suppliers.**
- Consider service providers used, such as feed merchants, farriers and veterinarians, and limit their exposure to internal staff.

### Diminished workforce

✓ **Each farm needs to work out its own contingency arrangements for operating in the event of a diminished workforce.**

- Start planning now for how you will continue to operate when your workforce has been significantly reduced through actual infections, or as a consequence of a large number of staff being in isolation due to contact with an infected person.
- In the face of a serious shortage of labour, can the available workforce be used differently.
  - **Consider the repercussions on your clients of any changes and prepare to help them over it with communication.**

### Communication with your clients

✓ **It's important to keep your clients up to date on your preparedness and contingency plans.**

- Let your clients know what you have done by way of preparedness.
- Keep them regularly updated on developments within your company.

## SUPPORT YOUR WORKFORCE

- Follow up with affected employees, to ensure they feel supported and have access to relevant information.
- Encourage unaffected employees to provide support to their colleagues that may be in self isolation or recovering from infection.
- For more information and resources visit the Federal Government's [Head To Health website](#)

### Or contact

- Lifeline Australia: 13 11 14
- Beyond Blue Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service: 1800 512 348
- Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800
- National Coronavirus Health Information line: 1800 020 080

## Key Messages

- **Many people will find self-isolation difficult.**
- **Give your colleagues a call to make sure they are coping and feel supported.**
- **Additional help and support is always available.**

### For more information

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