

Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets
Food Safety & Consumer Protection Division
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Dear business owner,

You are receiving this letter because it appears that you continue to provide critical services and functions related to agriculture during this public health emergency. First, thank you for your invaluable contributions. Our crisis would be far worse without the support of the State's agricultural industry.

Second, the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (Agency) wants to ensure that all agricultural businesses are adhering to important requirements that support the State's COVID-19 response. The Agency wants to protect your employees and customers, our employees, and all citizens.

As you know, the Agency provides regulatory services and other necessary expertise to help facilitate your business and protect the public. The Agency takes its responsibility seriously. We continually evaluate guidance from the CDC and the Vermont Department of Health and take appropriate steps in our ongoing efforts to keep our employees healthy and safe. Our combined efforts in support of that shared goal are essential. Indeed, it is only through the shared mission of protecting everyone's health that we can keep businesses operating and continue providing necessary Agency services to you during this challenging time.

I have become aware of the fact that some businesses are not following the health-related requirements that Governor Scott mandated in his Executive Order. The CDC and Vermont Department of Health issued important recommendations designed to reduce the spread of this highly contagious virus, and Governor Scott required businesses to follow them.

It is imperative that you follow these important mandates for the protection of your employees and ours. We must work collaboratively to safeguard Vermont's agricultural production and supply chains, and that begins by protecting the employees who perform the work. Some agricultural businesses around the country are already being forced to close as the virus infiltrates their workplace. Vermont is not immune from the coronavirus, which is actively spreading throughout our State.

To avoid potentially dire consequences and to protect Vermont's essential workforce, you must be sure that you, your staff, your customers and all others implement the following business practices to the maximum extent possible:

- Stay at least 6 feet away from others.



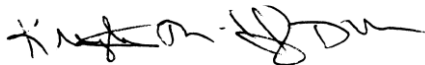
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Always wash your hands if your hands are visibly dirty.
- Keep employees who appear to have COVID-19 symptoms (including fever; cough; shortness of breath) away from work, and if they become sick during the day immediately separate them from others and send them home (or for medical treatment if warranted).
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands, and wash your hands immediately if you do.
- Have employees work from home whenever possible.
- Practice social distancing during all interactions with clients/customers, regardless of location.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with your sleeve or a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using approved cleaning sprays or wipes.
- Whenever appropriate, use personal protective equipment like gloves, coveralls and washable boots and change them at appropriate intervals.
- Review the small business best practices found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html> and implement them as needed.

We know this is a difficult time. It is essential that everyone—including all agriculture-related businesses—do their part to stop the virus’s spread. If Vermont’s agricultural businesses are unable to adhere to the social distancing and disease prevention standards, Agency employees may not be able to maintain the regulatory standards necessary for continued operations during this critical time.

It is important that we work together to help lead our State through this emergency. Vermont’s agricultural businesses are well-versed in the principles of biosecurity, and now is the time to rigorously and consistently utilize these important strategies. For the protection of your workforce and the State’s, to ensure the continued operation of Vermont’s essential agricultural sectors, and for the protection of our State and its citizens, it is imperative that you require and follow these important disease prevention standards.

Thank you for your prompt and ongoing attention to this critical issue, and please be well and stay safe.

Regards,



Kristin M. Haas, DVM, Director, Food Safety and Consumer Protection Division

