



## West Virginia Department of Agriculture

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# COVID-19 GUIDANCE & FAQ's: Farmers Markets & On-Farm Markets

Issue Date: 3/19/2020

**NOTE:** Given the fluidity of the current situation, this and further guidance is subject to change and/or amendments at any time. Readers are advised to check WVDA resources, frequently, for updated guidance

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Farmers markets and on-farm markets are encouraged to adhere to the following guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Be prepared at the Market before Customers Arrive:

- Effective immediately, all sampling at farmers markets is suspend.
- Consider delivery or pick up options.
- Consider pre-packaging bags of fruits, vegetables and other items to limit shoppers' handling of food, as well as keeping the flow of customers at a steady pace.
- Consider alternate locations that could allow drive through or pick up.
- Consider putting up signs and information on websites and social media to explain any changes, delivery options, or extra precautions taken to limit exposure to COVID-19.
- Instruct customers not to handle food.
- Package cheese and eggs for customers, even if the cheese and eggs are individually packaged. Open egg cartons for customers so they may inspect the eggs.
- Separate vendor stands at least six feet apart, if possible, to limit crowds
- Consider limiting the number of customers within your market at one time in the case of "panic shopping".
- If possible, have a different person handle products and handle money or wash hands/sanitize in between these tasks.
- Consider using disposable gloves when handling money from patrons.
- Remove tablecloths and sanitize tables regularly.
- Eliminate eating areas and gently direct customers to take prepared foods home to avoid crowds.
- Provide additional handwashing stations and/or hand sanitizer. It is recommended to use disposables towels with soap and water.
- Consider having a special time set aside for those patrons who may be elderly or immunocompromised.
- Consider postponing all gatherings and avoid having patrons gather in one space or area.

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## Have all Staff be Prepared to Direct their Vendors and the Public:

- Reinforce all health and safety precautions to all vendors. It is the duty of the market to help and support the safety and health of all participants.
- Provide guidance for handwashing (liked time intervals) and handling materials.
- Stagger lunch times or provide additional space to increase distancing of employees.
- All sick employees need to stay at home. Employees should not return until they have obtained guidance from a health care official.
- Inform employees where they can find sanitizing materials throughout on-farm contact points.
- Encourage employees to practice social distancing and avoid large gatherings to avoid risks for potential exposure during off hours.
- Encourage employees not to handle customers' reusable bags and let customers pack their own bags.

## Sanitize contact surfaces:

- Frequently disinfect all door handles and knobs, credit card machines, shopping baskets, etc. at a regular pre-established time interval.
- Frequently sanitize common gathering places – restrooms, etc.

If you are relocating a farmers market temporarily due to COVID-19, the WVDA will not need to issue a new farmers market permit. If your market is permanently relocating, please contact [farmersmarkets@wvda.us](mailto:farmersmarkets@wvda.us).

Currently, there is no evidence of food being associated with the transmission of COVID-19. To prevent a foodborne illness, it is still critical to follow the 4 key steps of food safety- clean, separate, cook, and chill. For more information on food safety and COVID-19, please visit the FDA at <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) hosted a stakeholder call on Wednesday, March 18th to discuss food safety and food supply questions related to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). A recording of this call can be found at <https://www.fda.gov>.

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**Q.** How long does the virus live on plant material?

**A.** As of right now, estimations predict anywhere from two hours to nine days.

**Q.** Should we take temperature of employees prior to harvesting or selling to public?

**A.** At this time, you should ensure your employees are feeling well before engaging the public.

**Q.** Should all produce be prepacked prior to market (i.e. no open-air stations)

**A.** This is not required at this time, but farmers markets should encourage patrons not to touch the products unless they are purchasing them.

**Q.** Should we take credit/debit only and avoid cash handling?

**A.** When possible, have a different person handle the money or wash hands and sanitize between tasks. Consider using disposable gloves when handling money, if hand washing each time is not an option.

**Q.** Should we have separate market times for high risk only (elderly/sick)?

**A.** We recommend each market make the appropriate accommodations for those who are at most risk for COVID-19.