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| living with covid-19: GUIDELINES for WRITing YOUR  Dairy business continuity plan |

**All dairy businesses must implement a COVIDSafe plan (a mandatory health and safety measure). Use this guide to update or build your COVIDSafe plan now.**

All employers must comply with mandatory public health measures. There are serious risks to dairy business continuity and animal welfare if owners, staff and/or key service personnel are infected.

Implementing your COVIDSafe plan will require a level of responsiveness to ensure it complies with changing situations in your state and local area. But the basic principles for keeping COVID out, stopping spread, and minimising the impact on your business, remain constant.

This guide covers the key elements for COVIDSafe plans for Australian dairy farms:

**Limiting the chance of COVID getting on to the farm**

1. Strongly encourage everyone on your farm to get vaccinated. This is mandatory in Victoria
2. Limit who can come onto the farm
3. Make it clear that no-one can come onto the farm if they have COVID symptoms, are a close contact of a COVID case or have been in an exposure zone

**Limiting the chance of spread of COVID on the farm**

1. Maximise ventilation – do as much as possible outdoors and get good airflow in enclosed spaces
2. Keep distance between people – at least 1.5 meters and preferably more
3. Where possible set up workforce ‘bubbles’. These are separate teams (even teams of one person) that do not overlap at or outside of work
4. Maintain all other controls such as wearing masks and cleaning and keep records of cleaning

**Tracking movement and dealing with a positive case if it does occur**

1. Use the government QR code system or written records to track visitors, contractors and staff coming onto your farm
2. Plan for the possibility of a positive case occurring on your farm – arrange for backup teams with other farms and ensure you have enough critical supplies in case you need to isolate for 2 weeks

**Keeping your plan ‘front of mind’ and up-to-date**

1. Communicate, monitor and review your COVIDSafe Plan on a regular basis. It is essential to regularly check the key government business and public health websites for your state and the Dairy Australia COVID Directory

When a COVID-19 case occurs in a business, the departments of health in your state look for evidence that there is a low chance of spread within the business. So, the better a business can demonstrate their COVIDSafe Plan, the higher their chances of being able to continue operating with least disruption.

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| COVIDSafe Dairy Business Continuity Plan |

Workplace: (for businesses with multiple sites, a COVIDSafe plan is required for each site)

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| **Business name** |  |
| **Site location/s** |  |

Responsible Person on Site: (for businesses with multiple sites, a responsible person should be appointed for each site)

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| **Name** |  |
| **Position** |  |
| **Telephone number** |  |
| **Email** |  |

**Use this guide to update or build your COVIDSafe plan now:**

* Fill in all 11 sections. Discuss with everyone on the farm to get their input to the plan.
* Decide the tasks and who will be responsible for ensuring they are done appropriately.

* When your plan is ready for action, sign it (last page), communicate it to everyone involved, email it to anyone in the farm team who needs it, implement it and put a copy in the business records.

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| **Limiting the chance of COVID getting onto the farm** |

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| **1. HAVING EVERYONE FULLY VACCINATED** |
| Vaccination is the most effective protection against death or serious illness, should a member of your team be exposed to COVID-19.  In Victoria, as a public health measure, all dairy workers must be fully vaccinated. Under workplace health & safety (WH&S) requirements for ‘duty of care’, requesting information about vaccination status and insisting on vaccination are reasonable actions. Privacy issues about collection of this data must be considered.  **In some states, COVID-19 vaccination is mandatory for the agricultural industry. We encourage farmers to check their local state requirements and consult with their staff.** |
| **The COVIDSafe plan on our farm – what will be done / who is responsible** |
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| Examples of good practices |
| * *Strongly encourage everyone on the farm to be fully vaccinated. Discuss this with team members and contractors.* * *If anyone is concerned about this, respectfully request that they discuss the matter with their GP.* * *Offer to help staff members register for a vaccine appointment.* * *If practical, allow staff to take time off work to attend a vaccination appointment.* |
| Resources you may find helpful |
| * [Mandatory Vaccination in Victoria – Agriculture sector guidance](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-sector-guidance-agriculture-forestry-and-fishing) |

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| **2. RESTRICTING WHO COMES ONTO THE FARM** |
| Only essential staff and service providers should come onto the farm, and then maintain physical distancing.  Visitors by appointment only. |
| **The COVIDSafe plan on our farm – what will be done / who is responsible** |
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| Examples of good practices |
| * *Put up signage at gates saying not to enter, visitors by appointment only, and who to contact, if need be, with a contact phone number.* * *Do as much interaction with service providers and advisers by phone or online as possible. Always ask yourself ‘can this be done remotely?’* |

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| **3. NOT COMING TO WORK WITH SYMPTOMS OR EXPOSURE** |
| All staff, contractors and visitors must comply with COVID-19 health advice.  When staff are on leave, their sick leave entitlements are covered in the Pastoral Award 2020 or the National Employment Standards if they are award-free managers. Other forms of leave can be taken in advance if the employer and the employee agree.  Replacement income support arrangements may be available through State and Commonwealth governments (for employees see Services Australia). |
| **The COVIDSafe plan on our farm – what will be done / who is responsible** |
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| Examples of good practices |
| * *Inform the farm team (staff and contractors), reinforce regularly, put up a poster.* * *Tell staff about their leave entitlements if they are sick or required to isolate (for example via payslips and at team meetings).* * *Require appropriate evidence (test results, department of health clearance) before return to work.* * *Prepare for changes in the roster to cover absenteeism of staff members required to quarantine or isolate. See the next section for operating with workforce bubbles.* |
| Resources that may help you |
| * [COVID-19 symptoms poster](https://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/resource-repository/2021/08/26/stay-covid-safe-poster#.YZsOndBBxPY) |

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| **Limiting the chance of COVID spreading on the farm** |

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| **4. MAXIMISING VENTILATION** |
| COVID-19 spreads with shared air - even a short conversation is enough for it to spread. Infected people are contagious for 48 hours *before* they feel the first symptoms. Being outside as much as possible and getting good airflow in all inside spaces reduces the risk of transmission.  Farms are generally easy places to achieve good natural ventilation, so this can be an easy win. Moving activities outside and removing doors where possible provide strong on-going reminders of the importance of ventilation.  **Ventilation and maximising distance between people are the two key elements of limiting spread of COVID-19.** |
| **The COVIDSafe plan on our farm – what will be done / who is responsible** |
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| Examples of good practice |
| * *Stop using common tea rooms for meals and meetings. Shift amenities to outdoors – including undercover areas with good air flow. Ensure that physical distance between people can be maintained.* * *Wedge open windows and doors or remove them altogether to improve ventilation in enclosed areas (dairy, lunchroom, workshop, office).* * *Limit use of enclosed spaces to only the essential tasks and the minimum number of people.* |
| Resources you may find helpful |
| * [Factsheet - COVID-19: Stop the spread on farm](https://cdn-prod.dairyaustralia.com.au/-/media/project/dairy-australia-sites/national-home/resources/2020/09/01/covid-19-fast-facts-for-preventing-the-spread-on-farm-7april2020/covid-19-fast-facts-for-preventing-the-spread-on-farm-7april2020.pdf?rev=5bb848d489134262b2bb86be876ad511) * [Quick COVID-19 checklist for dairy farmers](https://cdn-prod.dairyaustralia.com.au/-/media/project/dairy-australia-sites/national-home/resources/2020/09/01/covid-19-quick-checklist-for-farms-16april2020/covid-19-quick-checklist-for-farms-16april2020.pdf?rev=cc91f445881143dfa9ff5285f66c7d9e) |

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| **5. KEEPING DISTANCE BETWEEN PEOPLE** |
| **Keeping distance between people is key to limiting spread of COVID-19. This applies for all visitors, service providers and staff.**  Can your delivery and pickup requirements (including milk pick up) be set up to eliminate person-to-person contact? Can your service providers (for example AI techs, vets, agronomists) and contractors do work without assistance? If staff are required to be present, ensure everyone adheres to the minimum physical distance of at least 1.5 metres between people.  An effective way to stop spread between staff is to establish separate workforce teams who do not interact (see the next section on workforce ‘bubbles’). Each farm business must assess whether this is practical for them.  Set rosters and routines so staff can achieve physical distancing during work and at break times. Inform and train staff on any work practice changes. Encourage communication by phone/email rather than in person. Avoid complacency by reinforcing the importance of physical distancing practices during work **and** social interactions (e.g. on lunch breaks). Consider all situations where social interaction could occur and work out how to prevent person-to-person transmission.  Do not share enclosed spaces. Preferably, nominate only one person per shift to use the dairy office area, and keep it well ventilated. Have enough amenities available to avoid close contact.  Wherever practical, don’t share equipment or vehicles. If this does occur, deep clean between users. |
| **The COVIDSafe plan on our farm – what will be done / who is responsible** |
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| Examples of good practices |
| * *Arrange for contactless delivery and pickup services (including milk pickup). Provide signage for delivery drivers/tanker drivers where needed.* * *Provide instructions and facilities for service providers to be able to complete tasks as far as possible without staff involvement.* * *Maintain strict physical distancing for any contact by staff with farm visitors.* * *Assess whether you can arrange staff into separate teams (‘bubbles’).* * *Design rosters around separation of duties where possible. Where separation of duties is not possible, instruct staff to keep physically distanced and minimise time together.* * *Stagger start, finish and break times to stop usage of common areas as much as possible.* * *Take meal breaks and have meetings outside or in open undercover areas with good air flow.* * *Communicate by phone/email where possible rather than in person* * *Have vehicles allocated to individuals where possible. If vehicles must be shared, ensure that they are cleaned between users.* |

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| **6.** **OPERATING WITH WORKFORCE ‘BUBBLES’** |
| Workforce ‘bubbles’ are separate teams (even a team of one person) that do not overlap at work or outside of work. If a team member tests positive to COVID-19 and the department of health is confident that the bubbles have been operating completely separately, it is likely that only the people in that team will be mandated to isolate.  If it is practical to do so (on farms with large enough workforce), you can significantly increase your business resilience by arranging isolated workforce teams that do not interact with each other at work or outside work. Remember that changes to existing rosters for employees covered by the Pastoral Award 2020 must be done with consultation.  Keeping bubbles separate requires arrangements around work schedules, access to separate amenities and vehicles, and capacity to do deep cleaning between bubbles. |
| **The COVIDSafe plan on our farm – what will be done / who is responsible** |
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| Examples of good practices |
| * *Workforce ‘bubbles’ are set up, taking into account:*   + *The work to be done and who can do it*   + *The vaccination status of each person*   + *Whether people have direct or indirect contact out of work (eg live or travel to work together, have children at the same school or have social contact)*   + *How management/supervision and communication can be done without physical connection across bubbles*   + *Consultation with staff about rostering (as required by the Pastoral Award 2020)* * *Staggering of start and finish times, shifts and break times ensures workforce bubbles do not interact with each other (including in the car park).* * *For each workforce bubble there are separate amenities – for example separate toilets, wash areas and lunch areas. Where this is not possible, shared amenities are deep cleaned between each separate workforce bubble.* * *No farm vehicle is shared between workforce bubbles, unless deep cleaned between.* |
| Resources you may find helpful |
| * [DA Fact Sheet on deep cleaning](https://cdn-prod.dairyaustralia.com.au/-/media/project/dairy-australia-sites/national-home/resources/2020/09/01/covid-19-checklist-for-disinfecting-the-dairy-9april2020/covid-19-checklist-for-disinfecting-the-dairy-9april2020.pdf?rev=8a2538f28d8444bfa7f8a360bcc6900f) |

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| **7. WEARING MASKS, PPE, HYGIENE AND CLEANING** |
| Wearing masks, hygiene and cleaning have been key elements of limiting spread since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.  Ensure all staff wear a fitted face mask and other personal protective clothing and equipment (PPE) as required. Masks must fully cover nose and mouth. There must be adequate supplies available, and they must have training on the correct use, cleaning, storage and/or disposal. **PPE must not be shared with others.**  Personal and workplace hygiene practices are an on-going reminder of the importance of limiting spread of COVID-19.  A schedule and records of cleaning and disinfection for shared equipment, amenities and work surfaces are important aspects of your COVIDSafe plan. |
| **The COVIDSafe plan on our farm – what will be done / who is responsible** |
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| Examples of good practices |
| * *Provide and promote hand sanitiser stations and ensure adequate supplies of hand soap, paper towels and rubbish bins are available for all the farm team.* * *Ensure adequate supplies of PPE are available to the workforce as required.* * *Provide training on the correct use, cleaning, storage and/or disposal of PPE.* * *Monitor PPE use for compliance, for example no ‘chin nappies’ with masks.* * *PPE must not be shared with others. Separate supplies (for example box of gloves) can be provided to each staff member. Label all PPE with the person’s name.* * *Have a cleaning process clearly set out – what to use and how – on posters at relevant sites.* * *Have separate tools and equipment for each person. If equipment has to be shared, ensure that it is cleaned between users.* * *Have vehicles allocated to individuals where possible. If vehicles have to be shared, ensure that they are cleaned between users. Have sanitiser available in the vehicle.* * *Keep a clipboard handy to record who, when, where and how things were cleaned.* |
| Resources you may find helpful |
| * [Checklist for disinfecting the dairy](https://cdn-prod.dairyaustralia.com.au/-/media/project/dairy-australia-sites/national-home/resources/2020/09/01/covid-19-checklist-for-disinfecting-the-dairy-9april2020/covid-19-checklist-for-disinfecting-the-dairy-9april2020.pdf?rev=8a2538f28d8444bfa7f8a360bcc6900f) |

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| **Tracking movement and dealing with a positive case** |

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| **8. USING QR CODES (OR KEEPING WRITTEN RECORDS), PERMITS** |
| It is essential to have accurate records of all people who come onto the farm. Business continuity is more likely to be achieved if the department of health can trace contacts accurately and quickly.  Other records such as how you have set up workforce bubbles and cleaning schedules support implementation of your plan and your ability to demonstrate compliance if needed.  If workers need to enter/leave specific COVID designated restricted zones they must have the correct authorised worker permits and testing (as set out by state-based requirements). |
| **The COVIDSafe plan on our farm – what will be done / who is responsible** |
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| Examples of good practices |
| * *Set up a QR-code system (based on your state/territory QR tracing system).* * *Print and laminate your QR code page and locate at convenient farm entry points.* * *Ensure that all workers, visitors, contractors and staff use the QR code to check in.* * *If you do not have a QR system, keep written records of mobile numbers and full names of all visitors, contractors and staff for at least 28 days.* * *Provide timely reminders to all staff and visitors about checking in.* * *Retain staff records (including contact details and shifts worked) electronically and be able to provide them to an authorised officer on request* * *If they require them, ensure all workers have applied for, received and carry authorised worker permits and COVID test negative results.* |
| Resources you may find helpful |
| * [Checklist for dairy farmers affected by a COVID-19 case](https://cdn-prod.dairyaustralia.com.au/-/media/project/dairy-australia-sites/national-home/resources/2020/09/01/covid-19-checklist-for-farms-affected-by-a-positive-diagnosis-29-july-2020/covid-19-checklist-for-farms-affected-by-a-positive-diagnosis-29-july-2020.pdf?rev=f01f13f0c4004fb68b8ef4be878b3d9d) |

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| **9. PLANNING FOR A POSITIVE CASE – PEOPLE AND SUPPLIES** |
| Plan for the possibility of a positive case occurring on your farm. Think ‘when not if’ and ‘stress test’ your plans by thinking through this scenario. Organise to have:   * Contact details for notifying your (i) Processor (ii) WHS Regulator (note: this is still required by law in most states) * Records of staff, contractor and visitors on the farm for department of health contract tracing * A copy of your COVIDSafe Plan for the department of health and WHS Regulator * Ways of communicating with staff to ensure their well-being during isolation * Backup arrangements (for example with other farms) for emergency staffing and appropriate mechanisms for employment (for example casual employment) * Written instructions for other people to run essential operations for the farm * Order enough critical supplies should you need to isolate for at least 2 weeks   You must comply with regulators’ directions regarding workforce isolation, business operation/shut down and deep cleaning requirements. If you have good records, you will be able to discuss business continuity options with the Regulators.  Communication with all staff about these plans is essential. |
| **The COVIDSafe plan on our farm – what will be done / who is responsible** |
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| Examples of good practices |
| * *Set up a system to ensure records are up-to-date and easily accessible – somebody’s responsibility* * *Ensure you have written operational and human resource procedures so that if you need to find staff to fill critical roles quickly, they will be able to operate with minimal direction and you can employ them with correct inductions, safety protocols and with a valid, legal employment contract.* * *Order and store enough critical supplies for at least 2 weeks.* * *Make backup arrangements with other nearby farms so their staff could step in to help if needed.* * *Communicate to staff about what will be in place in regard to leave arrangements should a positive case occur, and they are in isolation or quarantine.* * *‘Stress test’ your plans by thinking through scenarios of having a positive case or serious exposure in staff or management.* |
| Resources you may find helpful |
| * [*Webinar Recording (YouTube) – Webinar One (Stop COVID coming in, procedures & process, shifts and worker bubbles - learnings from the Shepparton Outbreak August 2021)*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWum0vOG_wU) * [*Webinar Recording (YouTube) – Webinar Two (If COVID does enter your business - learnings from the Shepparton Outbreak August 2021)*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQj_e6Up950) * [*Practical advice around COVID-19 and your farm – learnings from the NSW outbreak October 2021*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fAtvsLv4KA) |

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| **Keeping your plan ‘front of mind’ and up to date** |

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| **10. COMMUNICATING, REVIEWING REGULARLY** |
| Everyone needs to know what they need to know to play their part. Build trust, be empathetic, be clear and listen carefully and be supportive. Communication is also part of your IR and WHS responsibilities, especially around policies and procedures that affect the workforce. *Note: In response to a local outbreak it is essential to review circumstances and communicate with all staff on a daily basis.*  Short, regular structured talks/training sessions on your COVIDSafe plan are good for training all staff. Whatever mechanism you use, keep records of this safety training. Signage and posters in the workplace help to reinforce key messages.  Because COVID-19 is changing the landscape quickly, you need to regularly check the key **government business and public health websites** **for your state** and the **Dairy Australia COVID directory**.  When a COVID detection occurs in a business the department of health looks for evidence that spread within the business is low risk. So the more a business can demonstrate their COVIDSafe Plan, the better their chances of being able to continue operating with least disruption. |
| **The COVIDSafe plan on our farm – what will be done / who is responsible** |
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| Examples of good practices |
| * *Check in with staff (and yourself) to see ‘how things are travelling’ – at work and outside work.* * *‘R U OK’ is a good start to monitoring the mental health of all people involved with the farm.* * *Provide training in sessions such as regular ‘toolbox talks’.* * *Keep a record of training in the farm safety training record.* * *Use signage and posters where appropriate to reinforce key messages.* * *Make changes to this COVIDSafe plan to meet current public health orders and communicate the changes with your workforce so they can implement the new expectations.* * *Ensure that the plan is accessible to all employees (or even provide them a copy directly) as a point of reference.* * *Monitor and review for compliance, regularly consulting and communicating with the workforce.* |

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| **OTHER THINGS** |
| There may be other elements to include specific for your farm. If so, include here. |
| **The COVIDSafe plan on our farm – what will be done / who is responsible** |
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Signature:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I acknowledge and understand my responsibilities and have  implemented this COVIDSafe plan in the workplace. | |
| **Signed** |  |
| **Name** |  |
| **Date** |  |