

COVID-19 Outbreak Info – Harmony Beef

Q & A for Plant Workers

May 4, 2020

About the Illness:

- **Is there an updated list of how Coronavirus presents? Is diarrhoea a new way it presents?**
 - Yes find a full list of symptoms: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16997.aspx#sign>
 - Diarrhea has been reported as a new symptom.
- **How long are you contagious, once you get COVID?**
 - We believe you are infectious for 10 days from when you first have symptoms or until your symptoms end, whichever is longer.
 - It takes between 2 and 14 days after people are exposed to the virus for people to begin to show symptoms.
 - People can be infectious 1-2 days before they have symptoms.
 - This is why we tell people to not come in contact with other people for 10 days, to protect those around you from getting sick.
 - This is called self-isolation.
 - And, even if that 10 days has passed, but you are still sick we ask that you continue to self-isolate to prevent spreading infection to others.
- **When is it safe for recovered employees to return to work?**
 - If you have tested positive for COVID-19 OR are symptomatic you must isolate for a minimum of 10 days, beginning when the symptoms started, OR until symptoms have completely cleared – whichever is longer.
 - If you have been in close contact with someone who is COVID-19 positive OR contact with someone who might have COVID-19 you must isolate for 14 days since last time you were in contact with this person.
- **Is it true that an estimated 1 in 4 Coronavirus carriers could be Asymptomatic?**
 - A wide range of rates are being reported in studies, so we cannot verify that 1 in 4 carriers are asymptomatic.
- **Do infected and asymptomatic persons shed the virus enough to infect others?**
 - People who test positive for COVID-19 but do not have symptoms are still believed to be infectious. In the absence of any symptoms, they are considered infectious and should stay home from 10 days after the day the positive test was collected
- **How contagious can an asymptomatic person be?**
 - We don't have specific data but what we are seeing is that the majority of people who are tested positive for COVID can be traced back to someone with symptoms.
 - We think that those who do not have symptoms are not as contagious as those who have symptoms. But they can still spread the virus, so we need to be careful.
- **If you had initially tested negative but suddenly developed light symptoms like feverish sensation and running nose and was asked to be retested but feels better. Is it safe to return to work?**
 - Anyone who has any symptoms must stay home for 10 days or until symptoms end (whichever is longer); this is true whether or not they test positive or negative for COVID-19

- **When I first tested my test came back negative. Two days later I felt feverish again so I called 811 and was asked to come in for testing again. Should I go back to work if the test is negative again?**
 - A fever and runny nose are symptoms of COVID so if you developed them after a negative test you should self-isolate for 10 days or till the symptoms are over, whichever is longer.
 - You can also go online to request another test. Arrange to be retested if your symptoms return.
 - Stay off work for 10 days
 - If test comes back negative and your symptoms fully resolve, you would be able to return to work after the 10 days.

- **We have learned that this corona virus can live on metals, woods and other things for hours and days. Does the viral load matters for the degree of transmission from person to person or a minimum number of the virus can cause the disease?**
 - Yes – the viral load does matter. Viral load is a measure of the amount of virus that a person needs to be exposed in order to become infected.
 - That’s why we think some people who are asymptomatic can spread the virus, while in some households where one person has COVID no one else gets sick.
 - The test is very sensitive, so it detects the smallest amount of the virus present in the back of the nose and throat, on a surface.

Testing:

- **If you have no symptoms, can you test positive?**
 - Yes, if you have the virus you can test positive even before you have symptoms.

- **People who don’t show symptoms can also spread the virus. Why not test everyone?**
 - We are offering testing to people working in Cargill and other meat plants, even if they don’t have symptoms.
 - It is not a requirement to be tested if you don’t have symptoms, but we do recommend it.
 - Similarly in Continuing Care Homes, we are testing staff and residents, even if they don’t have symptoms.
 - For the general Alberta population, it is most important to test those who have symptoms, as they are most infectious and likely to spread the infection.
 - Anyone with symptoms in Alberta is eligible for testing.
 - We must ensure we balance the testing capacity we have with our testing strategy.
 - All testing is free of charge.

- **I tried to do the online assessment, but I don’t understand the questions. What other options does AHS have?**
 - People can call Health Link 811 to speak directly with a Registered Nurse who has been specially trained to respond to concerns about potential COVID-19 exposure.
 - Health link offers interpretation services, in more than 300 languages, 24/7. If you need language support, please call 811 who can help.

Self-Isolation and Protection

- **I’m wondering if you can talk more about isolation as there is much confusion around those who are not infected but who may be living with those who are positive or symptomatic and isolating. Sometimes it is unclear to those in that situation whether they have to isolate as well if they’re feeling well.**
 - People who are living with someone who has a confirmed case of COVID-19 should **also** self-isolate for 14 days. The 14 days begins when the symptoms are first identified.

- For example, if a husband tests positive their wife also needs to self-isolate for 14 days from the time the husband began to self-isolate. The ill husband should be in a separate bedroom, and using a separate bathroom to limit the spread of the virus in the family.
- **If there is a confirmed case in the household, what should the other people in that household do?**
 - If there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the household, all other members of the household should self-isolate for 14 days from the first date that the case’s symptoms showed.
 - This will help prevent the spread of the infection.
 - If another member of the household tests positive, the 14 days starts again for the whole household if there is ongoing interaction with the positive case.
 - If people are having difficulty self-isolating because of a large household there is support available to help people self-isolate. To access these services, you can contact your family physician or 811.
- **Why is it that some people in my household have gotten COVID-19 and other people in my same household haven’t?**
 - In many households in China, only 15% of family members got infected. How many people get infected depends on how good the sick person is at isolating from the family members who are well.
 - It may be that the normal measures you and your family do - such as hand washing and regular household cleaning - were able to stop the infection being spread between your family members.
- **What is your opinion on wearing gloves versus wearing no gloves and using sanitizer when possible in the workplace?**
 - Gloves can cause a lot of confusion. When people put on the gloves they get a sense that they are protected, and may do things with the gloves on that they wouldn’t do with their hands. And if you’re touching surfaces with the gloves, the gloves can pass the virus to your mouth, nose and eyes just as easily as the hands.
 - If someone is keeping the same gloves on there is a chance someone has the virus on their gloves, and is spreading the virus.
 - Unless you are required to wear gloves for as a requirement for work such as food safety or workplace health and safety, cleaning your hands with alcohol based hand rub is recommended.
- **Please explain mask protocol and safe handling of used/dirty masks. How long are masks good for? What if they get wet/dirty?**
 - The type of masks that are being used in Harmony, and that we are recommending people wear out in the community, are designed to protect others: to stop the spread from the person wearing it to others.
 - If the mask becomes wet it is no longer effective, and should be changed.
 - If you have been wearing your mask outside or at work you should consider it dirty and discard it when you get home. Clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water. Do not touch the front of the mask. Remove mask using the ties or elastic loops. Discard immediately in garbage can. Clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water. It is important that you carefully follow these steps as the virus can be on the outside of the mask, and can contaminate your hands when you touch it.
 - Harmony Beef is providing masks to employees each day when they arrive at work, as part of the screening process.
 - If you have made your own mask, it should be washed regularly. Putting in through the washing machine has proven to be very effective.
- **Will we get a fresh mask to wear back to work in the morning if we are carpooling?**
 - Yes, Harmony is supplying one extra mask to carpools if they are from different households.

Worker Safety at Harmony

- **What is the current procedure for new employees coming to the plant? Are they being tested before they start work?**
 - An AHS Medical Officer of Health (MOH) and an Environmental Health Officer visited the plant April 28th to monitor the process being used to test employees who are coming to work, and went through the assessment themselves. The MOH had no additional recommendations for Harmony Beef at that time.
 - Harmony Beef will continue to work closely with AHS to create a safe environment for employees.
 - If you are feeling ill, you should not go to work. Please call the Absence Line to let Harmony know how you are feeling. It is important to ensure that those who are ill are not at work, to limit the spread of infection.
 - Please call 811 to discuss your symptoms, and a registered nurse will help determine if you require testing for COVID-19.

- **Do you consider it safe to continue the production at harmony even though many people haven't been tested?**
 - Yes. What is most important to prevent the spread of infection within Harmony, or any workplace, is practicing good hygiene measures: keeping physical distance, using a mask with physical distancing is not possible, washing your hands regularly with soap and water or using a hand sanitizer, and staying home when you are sick.
 - We have recommended measures for workplaces to protect employees, which Harmony has put in place.
 - These are behavioural measures that require us all to understand and practice them – that can be a challenge. So we've also recommended physical controls, like plastic barriers to provide additional protection in case the behavioural measures slip.