

## COVID-19 and Small Retail Processing Establishments (RPE)

This guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of COVID-19 in humans. The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), in consultation with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), will update this guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available. Local environmental health and public health agencies may have additional guidance and/or requirements regarding these operations in their jurisdiction.

### BACKGROUND

Food and agriculture is identified as an essential component of the nation's critical infrastructure, as defined by the Department of Homeland Security. It is an essential part of keeping supply chains full and people nourished. The food supply is vital to protect against disruptions that would pose a serious threat to public health, safety, welfare, or to the national economy. The entities that make up the food supply are vast and must prepare for possible impacts of COVID-19 and take precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as well as other infectious diseases.

Currently, there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food. Generally, because of poor survivability of these coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely very low risk of spread from food products or packaging.

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. This is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads, but the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is still learning more about this virus. The virus that causes COVID-19 is [spreading from person-to-person](#), mainly through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Spread is more likely when people are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).

### GUIDANCE AND BEST PRACTICES FOR RETAIL PROCESSORS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

As part of the Food and Agriculture essential function, retail processing plants remain open to ensure food supply. Those working at retail processing facilities are allowed to travel to and from the establishments.

**In order to minimize the spread of COVID-19 amongst people, the following best practices at Retail Processing Establishments (RPE) are recommended:**

- Minimize people at the retail processing facilities to essential personnel only, which includes necessary employees to operate the facility, Processing Inspectors (PI's), regulatory inspectors, and customers (i.e., no additional visitors or social gatherings).
- Perform the regulatory required annual review of the plant's Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOPs) and consider adding items and issues related to Covid-19 mitigation.

- Have suppliers remain in their truck as much as possible.
- Use establishment staff to assist in unloading supplies or animals, if possible.
- Conduct continuous hygiene practices, [routinely clean](#) frequently touched surfaces (employee and customer) in addition to those food contact surfaces identified in the plant's SSOP.
- RPE's should look at reducing employee's physical contact with customers by offering pre-ordering and payment along with curbside pickup and delivery services. Employees can place orders at car-side for customers and not have direct contact with surfaces touched by the customer.
- Follow [CDC guidelines](#) for COVID-19 when doing business at the Retail Processing Establishment:
  - Avoid shaking hands
  - Always stay six feet (three paces) away from non-family members (social distancing)
  - Avoid touching your face
  - Cover a cough with your elbow and sneeze into a tissue
  - Frequently wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
  - If soap and water aren't available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Have supplies readily accessible for people to follow CDC guidelines including hand sanitizer or hand wash station, napkins/paper towels, garbage cans, etc.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) refers to protective clothing, helmets, gloves, face shields, goggles, facemasks and/or respirators or other equipment designed to protect the wearer from injury or the spread of infection or illness.
  - PPE will minimize the spread of infection from one person to another.
  - Effective use of PPE includes properly removing and disposing of contaminated PPE to prevent exposing both the wearer and other people to infection.
  - If social distancing (about 6 feet) cannot be maintained, PPE use should be considered.
- Encourage people to stay away from the retail processor establishment if they:
  - Are sick or showing symptoms related to COVID-19 such as:
    - Fever
    - Dry cough
    - Short of breath
  - Have been in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19
  - Are in a high-risk category including:
    - Over age 65
    - Have underlying health conditions
- Any restaurants on the retail processor's premises need to be closed for dine-in eating and may only offer food for take-out.

**FOR ADDITIONAL AND UP TO DATE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT:**

- ✚ CDFA Guidance: <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/coronavirus/>
- ✚ California Department of Public Health: <https://covid19.ca.gov/>
- ✚ CDC Guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

- ✚ CDC Interim Guidance (Meat/Poultry Processing):  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/meat-poultry-processing-workers-employers.html>
- ✚ FDA: <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/general-hospital-devices-and-supplies/personal-protective-equipment-infection-control>
- ✚ AAMP: <https://www.aamp.com/wp-content/uploads/420-AAMPlifier-1.pdf>