ESSENTIAL BUSINESS, AS USUAL

The COVID-19 outbreak is still growing in the USA and many parts of the economy have slowed or halted completely as non-essential businesses have been asked to subside in an effort of social distancing. Not surprisingly, most agricultural operations remain at work. During times of prosperity in the nation it is often forgotten or ignored, but farming is essential business across the country and that fact is evident now more than ever.

With the nation reliant on agriculture to feed those stuck at home and to help buoy the economy while many industries are forced to close, it is important those on farm operations take the necessary steps to protect themselves and others for possible infection. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) presents the following guidelines for helping prevent the spread of COVID-19:

• **Wash your hands** often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

• If soap and water are not readily available, **use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol**. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.

• **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth** with unwashed hands.

• **Avoid close contact** with people who are sick

• **Put distance between yourself and other people** if COVID-19 is spreading in your community.

• **Stay home** if you are sick, except to get medical care.

**Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.

• **Throw used tissues** in the trash.

• After coughing or sneezing or handling tissues, immediately **wash your hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

A lot of these suggestions may like seem common sense, but it is easy to forget how many times you can cough or touch your own face throughout the day. Some of these suggestions can be difficult to follow when out in the field; keeping a bottle of hand sanitizer in the truck or tractor might be the easiest way to slow spread of coronavirus while working.

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The Risk Management Agency identifies Human Risk as one of the five areas of risk producers face during the day-to-day operation of their farms. Preparations for a pandemic fall under Human Risk. The World Health Organization (WHO) operates under the belief employees trust information from their employers regarding health and safety than from any other source. If you have outside employees on your operation, even if it is only one or two workers, it is a part of proper risk management to discuss with them the necessary safety measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

There is a lot of uncertainty in the country and the world right now regarding not only what happens next, but also what is happening now. The farm community needs to be working to help sustain towns, cities, states, the nation, and the world, but individuals need to protect themselves. Avoid touching your face as much as possible, wash your hands before touching your face, keep hand sanitizer near you, and limit your exposure to others, particularly those who may have been exposed to COVID-19.

Be safe!

USDA and Cooperative Extension—a partnership to help you make the best-informed risk management decisions for your family. Only a licensed agent can sell you crop insurance. You can get current information about these and any other crop insurance and/or revenue protection issues by sending questions to decrophelp@gmail.com or calling (302) 242-8806. We can help you know which questions to ask a crop insurance agent.