

West Virginia Department of Agriculture

Kent A. Leonhardt, Commissioner
Joseph L. Hatton, Deputy Commissioner



Memo to West Virginia Livestock Markets Regarding COVID-19

On Friday, March 20, Commissioner Kent Leonhardt and Governor Jim Justice discussed the current health crisis we are facing and the impact it has on our food industries. Commissioner Leonhardt advocated to the Governor that our agriculture operations are essential and must remain operating during these times. The Governor committed to keeping **livestock and farmers markets open**, as well as other agriculture businesses necessary to support our nation's food supply.

Some of you have been contacted by your respective county health departments about the continuation of your operations. It is our understanding those discussions have been focused on the dine-in areas and managing crowd sizes. We recommend you heed their cautions, as well as use the below link from the Livestock Market Association for guidance on how to prepare for COVID-19. <https://lmaweb.com/livestock-marketing-association-on-covid-19-precautions/> If health department issues can't be resolved locally, please advise the Commissioner or myself and we will aid in resolving the matter.

Below are specific strategies from LMA to markets in order to prepare for and mitigate disease spread:

- Familiarize yourself with and follow rapidly changing local and state rules regarding assembly of crowds. If you need assistance interpreting relevant recommendations and mandates, please reach out to Chelsea Good at cgood@lmaweb.com/816-305-9540 or your Region Executive Officer;
- Work with your café operators to follow location-specific guidance which may include closure or offering to-go service only;
- If you are in a situation where you are working to limit crowd size, request that consignors deliver livestock and return home rather than remaining at the facility;
- Markets working toward limiting crowd sizes at their facilities may want to put up signs to communicate with visitors. If you need help crafting sign language, please reach out to LMA;
- Offer consignors flexibility in picking up their checks if they can't wait for them to arrive by mail, such as delivery or pick up from their vehicle while remaining in parking lot;
- Instruct any employee or visitor exhibiting symptoms of illness to remain home and request that any employee or visitor who is a member of a population of heightened vulnerability to consider avoiding areas where people are gathering;
- Evaluate all options to utilize web broadcast or phone bidding;
- Provide ample opportunities for visitors and employees to wash hands following CDC best practices;
- Clean and disinfect all commonly used areas frequently including restrooms and restocking with soap, paper towels, and hand sanitizer;
- Update your website with instructions to customers and your plans for continued operation;
- Utilize your social media platforms to share fact-based information and your plans for continued operations. If you need help drafting your social media or website statements, please reach out to Kristen Parman at kparman@lmaweb.com/816-645-5916 or your Region Executive Officer.

The recommendations from the LMA are good ways to adjust the logistics of your market to help mitigate exposure to COVID-19. Just like many of the businesses of our state, we need to reduce crowd sizes in order to diminish the spread of the virus. We hope we can count on you to do your part by incorporating the LMA recommendations into your business practices.

Our staff will continue business as usual for the time being. Although, staff have instructed to practice social distancing and adhering to personal biosecurity. If we can be of assistance in your response to COVID-19, please let us know.

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