Protocol to Manage Risk of COVID-19 for Continuation of Meat Processing – Alert Level 2

Version 10/09/21

Background

The protocol has been written by MIA to provide guidance and a measure of certainty and consistency for meat processors and associated services at Alert level 2.

The Covid-19 response is highly challenging and policies and procedures are developed in a highly uncertain environment. MIA members are asked to feedback to MIA how this protocol is working in practice, so the protocol can be reviewed and updated as necessary.

Legal requirements

The minimum legal requirements for all businesses are set out in COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level Requirements) Order. The current version is:
https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2021/0237/latest/whole.html#LMS544887

These are minimum legal requirements, and do not take into account the greater level of risk for meat processors, or the importance of ensuring high standards are being met for market access.

Workplaces have duties to ensure the health and safety of their workers and persons on site under the Health and Safety at Work Act, which includes managing the risks from Covid.

WorkSafe have been delegated enforcement functions for Covid-19 response, as well as their roles under the of the Health and Safety at Work Act.

Covid-19 Safety Plan

All sites must have in place a Covid-19 safety plan.

The Covid-19 safety plan must state the business, who is responsible for the plan, the relevant worker representatives and how workers have been engaged on the plan, and controls to prevent transmission of Covid-19.

Duties of operators

Operators must so far as is reasonably practicable consult, cooperate and coordinate activities with all other businesses they share overlapping duties with, including MPI Verification Services and AsureQuality.

Engagement with workers

Operators must engage with their workers and enable them to participate in managing the risks of Covid-19.

Development of the Covid-19 safety plan must be done in consultation with Health and Safety Representatives, and copies of the plan made available to workers.

Reduce risk of workers becoming infected off-site

Processors must maintain general awareness for all workers on the need to:

Become fully vaccinated, as well as their families	Workers should be vaccinated as soon as possible to protect themselves, their families, and their co-workers.

Wash hands frequently, with soap or sanitiser and for 20 seconds, and dry	Wash hands regularly.
Sneezing or coughing	Cover face with tissue or use crook of elbow. Anyone coughing or sneezing should be assessed and sent home.
Maintain physical distance from others of at least 2 metres in public	As much as possible, ensure 2 metre is the minimum physical distance outside the workplace.
Use of the QR Code tracer app	Use the QR Code tracer app outside of the workplace.
Stay home if feeling sick	Workers must declare if they have had any Covid-19 symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath or sore throat) before entering site. Stay home if coughing, sneezing, or running a temperature, and contact appropriate manager or Supervisor to notify absence.

Working off-site
All workers working off site (such as livestock reps) must:

Maintain physical distance from others of at least 2 metres	As much as possible, ensure 2 metre is the minimum physical distance.
Face-masks	Face-masks (or surgical masks) must be worn when indoors.
Use of the QR Code tracer app	Use the QR Code tracer app when visiting other businesses or sign in.

Transport to/from work
Unless travelling alone or only with people from the same household, travel to and from work must be:

in approved car pool	Car pool group must be recorded. Passengers must wear face-masks.
in van / bus	Record of passengers (if company van/bus) or bus number/time (if public transport) should be made. Passengers must wear face-masks.

Recording of workers and establishment of teams
Operators must have systems and process in place to ensure that each person who enters the workplace—
- scans the QR code for the workplace; or
- has attendance recorded to allow contact tracing if and when required.

QR Code at entrance to site	Ensure that a copy of the QR code for the business or service is displayed in a prominent place at or near the main entrances to the workplace (with multiple copies displayed to prevent crowding).
Record-keeping to enable contact tracing	All people entering the site must use the QR Code tracer app, automatic sign-in system, or attendance/payroll system (which must include name and contact details).
Form teams or bubbles	Workplace teams or bubbles are formed to better maintain business functionality in the case of a team member found to be

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	infected or a team member who has had close contact with an infected person.
Workers moving between teams or bubbles	In general, workers must be kept segregated in teams or bubbles, but some particular roles (managers, VS inspectors) have to move between rooms. Workers that have to move between different teams or bubbles must keep an up-to-date diary of their movements between rooms, including times and locations.
Avoid mixing of teams or bubbles	Stagger work times (rest breaks, lunch, start of shifts) to avoid mixing teams or bubbles. If possible, use separate ingress and egress zones.

Avoid potentially infected persons entering the site

Sites must be secured and access to plant is recorded.	Implement access control at all entrance points to control and record people and vehicle movement.
Health check	All persons must declare if they have had any Covid-19 symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath or sore throat), or whether they have been a close contact or live with a person who is a close contact, before entering site. If workers have these symptoms or are a close contact or live with a close contact with they must stay at home in self isolation in accordance with the Ministry of Health requirements.
Temperature testing where required	Every person entering the site for that day or shift must have their temperature taken. If the temperature is more than 38°C the person must not be admitted to the site, and have their name, department or 'bubble', and actions taken recorded (including any re-test or being sent home).

Face-masks
Face-masks (or surgical masks) must be worn when indoors and there are other people present.

Workers may remove masks in smoko/break areas for eating/drinking, donning/doffing, etc, but there must be at least 1 metre separation.

Face-masks do not have to be worn if:
- there is an emergency; or
- the person is in a defined space or an enclosed space that is separate from other workers; or
- the person is in a well ventilated office or administration area and there is at least 1 metre separation from others; or
- the person is communicating with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing; or
- the person has a physical or mental illness or condition or disability.

Face-masks must be surgical masks or with replaceable filters – cloth only masks are not acceptable.

Workers must be trained appropriately in using face-masks:
- How to don and doff correctly which includes washing hands before and after use and ensuring all face masks are fitted correctly.

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- Masks must fit snugly, moulded to the face and around the nose. (Snug fitting around nose helps prevent fogging of glasses). Make sure the mask fully covers the nose, mouth and chin.
- Do not touch the inside surface of face-masks.
- Dispose of masks that are wet, dirty or difficult to breathe through.
- If face-masks are to be reused, they must never be shared with another worker and should be washed, dried and stored correctly between use. Disposable masks must be disposed of in a single use waste bag after use.

When using face-masks in combination with visors or glasses, ensure that fogging/condensation does not impair vision and affect worker safety.

Face-masks must be replaced if dirty or wet.

N95 respirators (also termed KN95 masks or P2 respirators) are denser masks that fit snugly over the nose and mouth, and provide a higher level of protection. Masks/respirators should not have valves which allow the wearer to expel air normally.

Distancing at work
The requirements for physical distancing between workers is listed in the table below:

Maintain 1 metre or more separation	All people must keep at least 1 metre from each other so far as reasonably practicable.

Where less than 1 metre physical distancing	In situations where workers are required to work in close proximity within 1 metre of each other, a documented risk assessment must be made.
	
	1. Identify the location or role where workers are within 1 metre of each other.
	
	2. Consult with the workers involved and their Health and Safety Representative.
	
	3. Additional controls must be implemented, such as:
	  • Fixed screens between the workers, large enough so that the minimum face-to-face distance between workers is increased to more than 1 metre. The screen must be regularly disinfected; Or
	  • Plastic visor (in addition to face-masks). Or
	  • N95/P2 respirators (face masks) instead of surgical face-masks.

Cleaning and Disinfection
All frequent contact areas or high traffic touch points must be regularly cleaned and disinfected.

Cleaning/disinfection of non-processing frequent contact areas	Use antibacterial sanitisers to wipe or spray contact surfaces in frequent contact areas or high traffic touch points. Clean and disinfect rest and meal break communal areas after each break.
Cleaning/disinfection of processing areas	Practice as per the Company and Site risk management plan (RMP) per existing MPI requirements.

Sickness leave protocols

Worker has Covid-19 symptoms must contact doctor or Healthline	If a worker has Covid-19 symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath) they must contact doctor or Healthline 0800 358 5453 immediately. The worker must call Return to Work Officer (RTWO), Supervisor or appropriate manager and notify them if they are going to be absent and the reason why i.e. they have been instructed to self-isolate.
Confirmed Covid-19 worker	Any worker with a **confirmed** case of Covid-19 being notified at work will be subject to a strict risk management regime; worker will be immediately quarantined and subsequently managed by the Public Health Unit (PHU) from Ministry of Health. Worker must immediately advise RTWO or appropriate manager if Covid-19 test undertaken and disclose the test result. Worker is required to present a medical certificate from a health professional declaring them medically fit to return to work to the RTWO or appropriate manager before they can return to work. Supervisor have ready a list of all workers (including addresses and phone numbers) in the team and all workers who have been "close contacts". Isolate spaces that the infected worker may have spent significant time in and ensure cleaning and disinfection is undertaken before they are able to be used. Send workers in team home and tell them to self-isolate (stay home, avoid contact). The PHU will notify the site of any requirements.

Ventilation Systems
As Covid-19 is spread in indoor environments, there should be regular checks to ensure ventilation systems, especially HEP filters, are clean and functioning optimally.