Guidance for farmers, crofters and other agricultural workers on measures to prevent spread of COVID-19.

*Please note that this guidance will be updated as the situation changes. You should always refer to the ‘live’ version which is available at https://www.ruralpayments.org/

This is a summary of the sector-specific guidance documents issued for farming, crofting and related agricultural businesses and activity. This is provided as guidance only and does not amount to legal advice. Employers may wish to seek their own advice to ensure compliance with all legal requirements.

Please note that you should continue to adhere to the rules and guidance already in place covering farming and agricultural activities, not least those covered by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

The interpretation and use of this guidance should also be considered in line with normal protective security operations and practices.

If you know of someone who is not aware of this guidance and it is relevant to their situation, please make them aware of it.

Please be aware that there will be many farmers, crofters and family members who are in a higher risk category for coronavirus, e.g.: over 70s. See here for further information on who is more at risk: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/

As the number of cases of Covid-19 in Scotland have fallen significantly, from 31 July we have been able to amend our advice on shielding. We have paused the advice that those who were identified as being at highest risk of the virus should shield. Those who previously had to shield will be kept informed of any relevant health advice if things do change. You can also keep up to date with the most recent advice at https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding/pages/overview/

Be aware that restrictions in your local area may change dependent on which level or tier of protection the area currently falls under. There is a postcode checker here: https://www.gov.scot/coronaviruslevels

Keep yourself and others safe

To prevent transmission of COVID-19:

- Keep a physical distance of at least 2 metres from other people wherever possible;
- Wash your hands regularly, for at least 20 seconds, with soap and warm water;
- Avoid touching your face;
- Ensure that any surfaces you, family and workers come into contact with are cleaned and disinfected regularly.
If you have suspected symptoms or COVID-19 has been confirmed, you need to self-isolate and **must not be at work**.

**Given the current increasing number of COVID-19 cases in the community, the standard advice for self-isolation is to **stay at home** in your house and this is the default position which should be followed.**

You should make arrangements in advance with friends, family or neighbours, which can be put in place if the need arises, to ensure that all animals you are responsible for continue to be cared for.

This document includes information on how to do this, including contacts for Lantra Scotland’s Skills Matching Service and the Machinery Rings.

If you are self-isolating and need help caring for your livestock you can also contact the Royal Scottish Agricultural Benevolent Institution on 0300 111 4166 (7 am - 11 pm) or online at [https://rsabi.org.uk](https://rsabi.org.uk)

Only where you cannot make alternative arrangements is it reasonable for you to leave your house to tend to your livestock, to ensure animal welfare is not compromised – as long as this does not involve coming into contact with other people outwith your household.

Employers should not ask farm workers who are isolating to come into work before their period of isolation is complete, in any circumstances.


**Test and Protect**

The NHS will also now be asking people to self-isolate who do not have symptoms, but have been in close contact with someone who has been confirmed by testing to have the virus.

This is part of Test and Protect: Scotland’s approach to implementing the 'test, trace, isolate, support' strategy, is a public health measure designed to break chains of transmission of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the community. Read more about Test and Protect here: [https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-test-and-protect/](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-test-and-protect/)

**Test and Trace App**

Protect Scotland is an entirely voluntary app that is an additional part of NHS Scotland’s Test & Protect service. The app enhances contact tracing and quickly alerts app users that are at risk as they have come into close contact (less than 2m for 15 minutes or more) with an app user that has since tested positive for Covid-19.
Employers are asked to encourage their workers to download the app, however having the app should never be a requirement for any workplace.

Further information about the contact tracing app for employers, workers and customers is available

Planning for illness

COVID-19 is the biggest health challenge we have faced in our lifetimes and the measures we take to deal with it must reflect this.

It is essential that you make plans now in case of illness, so that friends, family, neighbours, contractors or volunteers can take over essential day-to-day jobs if you’re unable to work.

FAS have a whole range of resources to help you make a plan: https://www.fas.scot/emergency-planning/

Lantra Scotland can help to fulfil labour shortages in skilled or unskilled roles. https://www.scotland.lantra.co.uk/sms

Machinery Rings can provide contractors and labour if you are ill. www.scottishmachineryrings.co.uk

What if you or someone in your household becomes ill?

If you have suspected symptoms or COVID-19 has been confirmed, you need to self-isolate and must not be at work.

Employees should immediately tell their employer if they are ill or have any symptoms of COVID-19.

The symptoms of COVID-19 include:
- a high temperature – you feel hot when you touch your chest or back
- a new, continuous cough i.e. you’ve started coughing repeatedly
- a change in sense of smell or taste (anosmia).

If you have any of these symptoms you should return to your accommodation quickly and follow the stay-at-home guidance on NHS Inform (see link in Annex A).

If one person in your household becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms, everyone in that household must self-isolate. See NHS Inform for more detail: https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19
Testing

Anyone in Scotland aged 5 or over, who is self-isolating because they are showing symptoms can be tested.

You should get tested in the first 3 days of coronavirus symptoms appearing, although testing is considered effective up until day 5.

Testing under the UK programme in Scotland is currently conducted in drive-through sites operating at:
- Glasgow Airport
- Edinburgh Airport
- Aberdeen Airport
- Inverness - University of the Highlands and Islands campus
- Perth – University of Highland and Islands campus

There are also a number of mobile testing units which will be located in towns across Scotland for short periods each time.

You may have the option, depending on availability, to book a home test kit.


Sick Pay

All UK and EU workers are entitled to Statutory Sick Pay. The UK Government will reimburse smaller employers (less than 250 employees) any SSP paid to employees for the first 14 days of sickness.

Anyone who is self-isolating from others, in order to prevent infection or contamination with coronavirus in accordance with public health guidance, is entitled to receive SSP. This includes workers from the EU.

SSP under such self-isolating procedures is payable from day 1 and amounts to £95.85 per week.

Agricultural workers in Scotland, who have been employed for 52+ weeks, are covered by the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board which provides a higher level of sick pay than the statutory minimum.

People on low incomes will be eligible to receive a new £500 grant if asked to self-isolate. If you are asked to self-isolate and are eligible for this support, you will be contacted by the service to help you access this payment.
Mental health and wellbeing

These are uncertain and worrying times for everyone and for the farming and crofting community, COVID-19 has arrived at a particularly busy and potentially stressful time in the agricultural year.

During times of difficulty, RSABI supports people involved in Scottish agriculture emotionally, practically and financially. RSABI are there to help seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.

If you’re feeling stressed or isolated, or if you need practical help, please consider calling the helpline on 0300 111 4166. All calls are completely confidential. For more information on the support RSABI can offer, visit: https://rsabi.org.uk/Home-Page

Working safely on farms and crofts

Agriculture and food production is considered an essential service and one of the 13 designated Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) sectors, but not every activity within a national infrastructure sector is 'critical'.

Even where businesses are in the CNI category and judge themselves to be exempt from closure of business premises, not all of their operations may count as essential. Where those businesses can operate effectively through home working, that practice should be adopted.

To help you decide which actions to take, you should carry out an appropriate COVID-19 risk assessment, just as you would for other health and safety related hazards.

HSE is a key regulator for the control of COVID-19 in the agricultural industry. You can find further information on their website, to help you work safely (be COVID-secure) and manage the risk associated with running your business at this time: https://www.hse.gov.uk/index.htm

HSE has a helpful short guide to working safely during the coronavirus outbreak: https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/assets/docs/working-safely-guide.pdf

You should make a full risk assessment and consider all measures to prevent transmission of COVID-19, including revised cleaning schedules, altered working patterns and physical distancing.

You must take all reasonable measures to introduce work practices that ensure 2 metres of physical distancing between workers.

Where this is not possible your risk assessment should identify and use other measures to keep yourself and other workers safe. Examples include:

- assigning one person per work area;
- reducing the number of people in the work area;
- assigning and keeping people to shift teams (a cohort);
- keeping the number of people working less than 2 m apart to a minimum;
- avoid people working face-to-face, for example working side-by-side;
- using screens to create a barrier between people;
- providing additional PPE if necessary (Using any form of PPE is a last resort after you have assessed the risks).

If possible, machinery, vehicles or equipment should be allocated to one worker or used by as few workers as possible.

If sharing machinery, vehicles or equipment is unavoidable, you should wash your hands before and after use, and avoid touching your face.

All machinery, vehicles or equipment should be cleaned and disinfected regularly, and always before another worker uses it.

Where possible, in enclosed spaces all vents should be open for good airflow.

If you have any concerns about your safety as an employee, you should raise your concerns with your employer in the first instance.

If you are self-employed, refer to the detailed published guidance (see annex) to ensure you have taken all possible measures to protect yourself and others.

**If you employ other people**

As an employer, you must protect people from harm. You must specifically protect workers who are high risk for COVID-19 or living with an individual who falls within this category. An individual risk assessment guidance and tool has been developed help staff and managers consider the specific risk of COVID-19 in the workplace.

You must put safe systems of work in place and review them regularly. When the advice or guidance from the Scottish Government changes, you should quickly inform workers of the impact and change things accordingly in the workplace.

You must consult all your workers on health and safety. It is a two-way process, allowing workers to raise concerns and influence decisions on managing health and safety.

It is more important than ever to ensure workers are treated fairly. See the Scottish Government and STUC joint statement for further information on this: [https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-fair-work-statement/](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-fair-work-statement/)

You should regularly provide workers with information, training, instruction and supervision so that they can work safely.
You should check the health status of each worker before they start work each day. The Scottish Government does not recommend the use of temperature checking employees as a means of testing for COVID-19 due to the low efficacy rate of this method. Further information about the reliability of temperature checking as a test for COVID-19 can be found on the MHRA website: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/dont-rely-on-temperature-screening-products-for-detection-of-coronavirus-covid-19-says-mhra

Health Protection Scotland (HPS) have provided COVID-19 information and guidance for general (non-healthcare) settings which reiterates that people should not travel if they exhibit any COVID-19 symptoms: https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-guidance-for-non-healthcare-settings/

For more information on talking with your workers about coronavirus: https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/assets/docs/talking-with-your-workers.pdf

**Facilities on farm**

If you provide accommodation for workers, workplace housing units, such as caravans, can be deemed equivalent of households. A worker cannot live in more than one household.

If it is not possible to completely maintain physical distancing between workers, consider organising as small a group of workers as possible, who live and work on site into fixed groups that work and live together, known as ‘cohorts’. These cohorts should then not mix with other groups of workers.

**If one person in any household becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms, everyone in that household must self-isolate.**

Employers should implement procedures to safely introduce new or seasonal workers into work-based accommodation, with a 14 day period of segregation upon their arrival. Work can be undertaken during this segregation period as long as all conditions are met (see https://www.sasa.gov.uk/document-library/social-distancing-guidance-horticulture-fruit-vegetable-sectors for details).

**Workers with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 symptoms must not travel.**

For seasonal workers arriving from outwith the UK please see further guidance: https://www.sasa.gov.uk/document-library/social-distancing-guidance-horticulture-fruit-vegetable-sectors

In locations provided for breaks or eating food, employers should ensure that workers can remain at a distance of 2 metres at all times.

Break times should be staggered to always minimise both congestion and contact. During break times physical distancing of 2 metres and hand hygiene should be maintained. Hand washing is even more important than usual at break times.
**Cleaning and hand sanitising**

Ensure that facilities are available for hand-washing and disinfecting equipment as required. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer should contain at least 70% alcohol.

For hand-washing, ensure soap, running fresh water and disposable hand towels are readily available and kept topped up at all times.

Make sure bins are provided for disposal of used paper towels / tissues and instruct all workers that these should be used.

Key touch points in the work environment should be identified and regularly cleaned and sanitised, e.g. door handles, hand-rails, keypads, vending machines, etc.

Enhance the regular cleaning regimes for toilet facilities particularly door handles, locks and the toilet flush.

You will need to determine a cleaning schedule for different areas and objects according to the level of risk.

**Managing others on site**

For some work to be carried out, other workers may need to come onto the holding.

Consider carefully whether the work activity that is being carried out is within the permitted activities for the particular tier of the Scottish Government’s Strategic Framework: [https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-19-scotlands-strategic-framework/](https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-19-scotlands-strategic-framework/)

Permitted work activities will partially depend on which level your local area is currently under and this can be found here: [https://www.gov.scot/coronaviruslevels](https://www.gov.scot/coronaviruslevels)

Visiting workers may include (but not limited to) contractors, hauliers, engineers etc. It is advisable to limit the number of visitors to the site at any one time, by determining a schedule for carrying out different works and services.

It is essential to keep a record of any visitors on site. This information could be used to trace anyone who’s had contact with COVID-19 and will help keep you safe.

If other workers are coming onto the holding, have a conversation by phone or send an e-mail beforehand to agree a plan of action for how the work will be carried out whilst maintaining physical distancing.

When communicating with other workers on site be sure to maintain 2 metres physical distancing at all times.
If you absolutely have to hold any briefing for workers, this must be carefully managed to ensure physical distancing of at least 2 metres between all present. Briefings should be held in the open air if at all possible.

If you have sheep shearers on-site, the NAAC has published a checklist to ensure safe working practices: [https://www.naac.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Coronavirus-NAAC-Checklist-on-Shearing-for-Shearers-and-Farmers-V3.pdf](https://www.naac.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Coronavirus-NAAC-Checklist-on-Shearing-for-Shearers-and-Farmers-V3.pdf)

**Deliveries**

Ensure delivery instructions are clear and available pre-delivery so that the driver is aware on arrival.

Arrange designated drop-off points for all on-site deliveries. Drivers should remain in their vehicles if their load will allow it or be directed to a safe space.

Avoid direct contact with driver of vehicle, maintaining 2 metres separation at all times.

Ensure there are handwashing facilities available for drivers to use if required. They should wash or sanitise their hands before and after unloading goods and materials.

Sites should continue to provide access to welfare facilities (toilets & hand washing facilities) for drivers visiting the site. Restricting access is against the law, and may actually assist in further spreading of the virus.

**Farmgate sales and farm shops**

If you sell products direct to the public from your holding, you should carefully consider what changes you may need to make to minimise any risk to either party. If possible consider offering online sales, click and collect or deliveries.

Put in place pick-up collection points where possible, and ensure that all surfaces that customers can potentially come into contact with are cleaned thoroughly and regularly.


**Working with your Vet**

Practices are providing veterinary services, however before appointments you should contact your vet to check physical distancing arrangements at the surgery or on site.
While there is no evidence of pets transmitting COVID-19 to humans, in line with the general advice on COVID-19, you should wash your hands regularly, including before and after you come into contact with pets or other animals.

Further advice for animal owners can be found here: https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-animal-owners/

**Farm and Croft Inspections**

If inspectors are coming onto the holding, first agree by phone or e-mail beforehand the Health and Safety requirements involved including the adjustments the inspector will make to maintain physical distancing and other appropriate controls.

It is important that you and anyone else on your holding adhere to physical distancing rules and maintain 2 m distance from inspectors at all times. If you have specific concerns about people coming onto the holding you should discuss this with the inspector. Additionally, if you have symptoms of COVID-19 or your household is self-isolating, you must inform the inspector prior to their arrival.

**Livestock Auction Markets**

Markets are also operating under strict guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect human health. You should always check the specific access and sale arrangements direct with individual auction locations, before attending any sales.

IAAS has refreshed its guidance for all its members to follow and this can be found here: https://iaas.co.uk/iaas-refreshes-guidelines-for-attending-auction-marts/

These recommendations include:

- Only those directly involved in sales can attend;
- You must not attend if you have symptoms of COVID-19, any other illness or underlying health problem;
- Pregnant women and children should not attend;
- You must not attend if you have been in contact with a COVID-19 case or you have been in a high-risk area.
- Face coverings are now mandatory in all enclosed areas of markets although exemptions are permitted in certain cases.

**Transport for workers**

You should only share a vehicle with those from your household, or your extended household*.

If you have no other option, you should follow the safe travel guidance at the Transport Scotland website which provides advice on how to share vehicles
safely. Carers and those they provide unpaid care for can travel together but they should follow that advice.

* An extended household is one where two households have joined together to form a single household. More on extended households.

If a shared vehicle (mini-bus, coach etc) has to be used to transport workers to a workplace or accommodation, the number of workers in each vehicle should be minimised, and they should space out on-board as much as possible.

The occupants should not touch their face and should wash their hands thoroughly, immediately before and again after each journey.

Shared vehicles should offer good ventilation and should be cleaned properly after each trip, e.g. handles and key touch points disinfected.

Where 2 metres separation in a vehicle cannot be maintained, if alternative methods of transport are available and practicable, these should be considered - such as cycling, walking, or public transport.

**Face Coverings**

By law you must now wear a face covering in shops, on public transport and public transport premises such as railway and bus stations and airports, and in certain other indoor public places such as shops, restaurants (when not seated), libraries and places of worship. There are certain exemptions and further guidance can be found here: [https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/pages/face-coverings/](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/pages/face-coverings/)

There is evidence that wearing face coverings can reduce the risk of the virus being transmitted. There is no evidence to suggest there might be a benefit outdoors from wearing a face covering unless in a crowded situation.

If you have Covid-19, but don’t realise it because you don’t have symptoms, a face covering reduces the risk of you passing the virus on to other people. Other people wearing face coverings help to protect you in a similar way.

A face covering is a non-medical covering of the mouth and nose, usually made of breathable fabric, e.g. a scarf. Scottish Government recommends reusable face coverings, which must be washed and used appropriately as per the guidance.

**PPE – personal protective equipment**

Routine (business as usual) PPE must continue to be worn for health and safety.

PPE is not expected to be needed outside of health care settings for purposes of controlling the risk of COVID-19.
However, if a risk assessment indicates a higher level of contamination or transmission, then the need for additional PPE could be considered.

Health Protection Scotland guidance offers advice on the use of PPE, confirming workplaces should use PPE consistent with local policies and in line with measures justified by a risk assessment.

Both the Scottish Government and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recommend a risk based approach focused on a hierarchy of control which seeks to:

- eliminate risks;
- combat risks at source;
- adapt workplaces to individual needs;
- ensure adequate staff training around processes to manage the risk;
- and then use PPE where required.

Where PPE is deemed necessary, an adequate supply and quality must be maintained which is provided free of charge to workers and which must fit properly.

**Any use of PPE is not a substitute for physical distancing practices, which must be maintained wherever possible.**
Annex A

Links to useful guidance


Health Protection Scotland’s guidance:  
https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-guidance-for-non-healthcare-settings/

NHS guidance:  

SG guidance on face coverings:  

SG and STUC joint statement on Fair Work:  

Health and Safety Executive Guide to Working Safely  

UK Government advice for working safely outdoors:  

Equalities and Human Rights Commission  

Industry-produced guidance

IAAS guidance on livestock auctions:  
https://iaas.co.uk/iaas-refreshes-guidelines-for-attending-auction-marts/

NAAC guidance for land based contractors:  
https://www.naac.co.uk/coronavirusguidance/

AHDB guidance for combinable crop deliveries and collections:  

AIC guidance for feed deliveries to farm:  

BALI guidance for landscape industries:  