



April 2020

Dear Food Industry Colleague:

As the public health director for the National Pork Board, I want to provide you with some information and perspective on the COVID-19 pandemic, and how our industry is responding in these challenging times.

On a normal day, retail grocery is a frenetic environment – but these are hardly normal days. When you add stay-at-home orders into the mix, along with overnight changes in shopping behavior, new store sanitation practices, labor and supply chain challenges, it equates to a seismic shift for everyone in food production, distribution and sales.

Things are changing rapidly, so it's hard to know if you've got the most recent and accurate information on U.S. pork production and COVID-19. What's fact, and what's fiction? Here's what we know at the National Pork Board:

Food (Including Meat) and Packaging are NOT a concern for COVID-19 transmission

Both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)) and the Food and Drug Administration ([FDA](#)) have gone to great lengths to reinforce the current scientific understanding of how this virus is transmitted: Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. Currently there is NO evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food.

While it's always a good idea to reinforce proper handwashing techniques and the guidance to not touch your face after touching other surfaces, the handling of boxes and other packaging should not be a concern for your employees or customers.

Meat Processing Plant Closures Are Related to Concerns with Employee Health and the Availability of Labor, NOT Food Safety

You've undoubtedly seen news stories about pork, beef and chicken processing plants closing due to COVID-19. In most cases, these closures are the result of concern for employee health after some plant workers have tested positive for the virus. Labor availability also has been a challenge, with many schools closed and limited daycare options. The meat these plants have produced, and hopefully will start producing again in the near future, has been through strict federal safety inspection and should pose no concern for you or your customers as it relates to COVID-19.

We're Working to Maintain Meat Supplies for Consumers

Just like the grocery sector, agriculture and food production is considered critical domestic infrastructure. Everyone involved in the supply chain – from the farm to your freezer section – understands how important it is to keep our nation fed. Per the [USDA's latest Hogs and Pigs report](#), the U.S. has near-record levels of pigs.

While there's an ample supply of pigs, temporary plant closures may create short-term supply chain issues as packers/processors adjust their logistics. Your suppliers understand their responsibility to both protect their employees and to ensure a safe, stable food supply for consumers.

Everyone at the National Pork Board, on behalf of our nation's 65,000 pig farmers, recognizes the challenging times the country is facing, and we want to keep you informed and assist you wherever and whenever we can.

In closing, I'd encourage you to bookmark these webpages so you can stay current on industry developments. If there's anything my colleagues or I can do to assist you, please don't hesitate to ask.

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus

www.usda.gov/coronavirus

www.fda.gov/coronavirus

Best Regards,

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