

Utah Agricultural Experiment Station Policy on Essential Farm Operations

Agriculture is considered an essential critical infrastructure sector. Food production, farm operations, and long-term or time sensitive agricultural research are activities that cannot be put on hold during a State or National emergency and then resumed at a later time. These activities are critical to protecting the health and well-being of all Americans. Workers in the agricultural sector are considered “Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers” and can continue essential activities during a shelter-in-place order to ensure continuity of functions critical to public health and safety, as well as economic and national security.

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Sector Profile

The Food and Agricultural (FA) Sector is composed of complex production, processing, and delivery systems and has the capacity to feed people and animals both within and beyond the boundaries of the United States. Beyond domestic food production, the FA Sector also imports many ingredients and finished products, leading to a complex web of growers, processors, suppliers, transporters, distributors, and consumers. This sector is critical to maintaining and securing our food supply.

Essential Workforce Related to UAES Operations

- Farm workers involved in domestic food production, including greenhouse plant production
- Farm workers employed in animal food, feed, and ingredient production
- Animal agriculture workers including those employed in animal production operations; raising of animals for food; veterinary health; manufacturing and distribution feed ingredients, feed, and bedding; transportation of live animals; transportation of deceased animals for disposal; slaughter and packing plants
- Workers who support the manufacture and distribution of forest products, including, but not limited to timber, paper, and other wood products
- Workers in food testing labs in institutions of higher education
- Food manufacturer employees including those employed in food processing (packers, meat processing, cheese plants, milk plants, produce, etc.) facilities; livestock, poultry, slaughter facilities; and artisan food production
- Workers supporting the sanitation of all food manufacturing processes and operations from wholesale to retail
- Workers supporting farmers’ markets, food banks, farm and produce stands, indoor and outdoor live plants produced for food/aesthetics, and similar food retail establishments

Critical Livestock Farm Activities

- Feeding and watering animals
- Cleaning and bedding pens or stalls
- Delivery and care of offspring
- Breeding of animals
- Milking of cows and does
- Veterinary care, including tagging, branding and vaccination of animals
- Moving animals to and from pastures
- Exercise of animals when needed
- Mowing and fertilizing pastures
- Irrigation of pastures
- Ordering, receiving and preparing feed
- Weed control around facilities and pastures
- Repair and installation of fences to meet immediate needs
- Maintenance of equipment and facilities

Critical Crop Farm Activities

- Preparation of fields for planting
- Planting of crops and plants
- Application of manure, fertilizer, herbicides and pesticides
- Irrigation of crops and plants
- Harvesting of crops and plants
- Other management practices to ensure health, production, and growth of plant stands, i.e. pruning of orchards, thinning, cultivation.
- Maintenance of equipment and facilities

Definition of Critical Research Activities at UAES Farms

- Essential and time-sensitive research
- Long-term/ongoing research for which missing a year would undermine that work
- Maintenance of valuable plant and animal germplasm
- Work focused on preserving key plant, animals, tissue culture, cell-line, environmental, or other samples
- Research where immediate discontinuation would generate significant data or sample loss, or significant harm to the long-term research enterprise
- All on-campus research must comply with the guidelines established by the Office of Research

Expectations

- Social distancing will be maintained at all times
- The number of people involved in any activity will be kept to a minimum
- Teams of people will be maintained so each employee is working with a minimal number of other people

- No more than one person will ride in a vehicle
- Appropriate PPE (coveralls, gloves, safety glasses, face shields, surgical masks, respirators, etc.) will be worn
- Equipment, door handles, surfaces etc. will be appropriately disinfected
- Research activities should not be 'business as usual' but essential and time-sensitive research necessary for students to continue, for plant generations, long-term/ongoing research for which missing a year of work or sampling would undermine that work, etc.
- PIs must submit a plan for research activities (on a project-by-project basis) to their Department Head that includes provisions for safety and social distancing, including traveling in separate vehicles, rotating schedules in laboratories, greenhouses, or in fields (generally 2 people should be present for safety, if someone is working by themselves they should message in/message out to supervisor). Each plan must receive approval by the DH, with concurrence of the UAES Director prior to initiating the activity.
- Continued work activities by staff and student employees is at the discretion of the individual employee. If an employee is uncomfortable continuing with their job activities, they should discuss it with their supervisor ASAP, so alternative arrangements can be made.
- All research activities must be approved by the appropriate Department Head and Dean/UAES Director Ken White. If warranted, appeals can be made to the Animal/Crop Research Task Force. Appeals should be sent to Chris Davies, the Task Force Chair (see contact information below).
- If anyone becomes sick the UAES administrative team (K. White, C. Davies, B. Miller, D. Feuz, P. Johnson, and D. Vanderwall) must be notified ASAP.

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