

# FACT SHEET: COVID-19 AND AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

**Updated: May 4, 2022**

This fact sheet provides up-to-date guidance and resources for farms employing International Agricultural Workers (IAWs)/Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs).

## COVID-19 WORKPLACE SAFETY PLAN

**Each farm owner is requested to submit an updated COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan to York Region Public Health for the 2022 season.**

Reminders:

- Ensure your workplace safety plan includes all recommended components as outlined in [Develop Your Covid-19 Workplace Safety Plan](#); this website includes additional templates and checklists to assist employers
  - York Region Public Health Inspectors are available to review plans; to request support, contact Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653 ext. 4 or email [Health.Inspectors@york.ca](mailto:Health.Inspectors@york.ca)
- Contact information of all employees (permanent, temporary or contract) who will be working on the farm should be available to York Region Public Health within 24 hours to support case and farm [outbreak management](#); information should include their names, telephone numbers, cohort details and housing location (house/trailer or off-site address)
- Continue conducting [daily active screening](#) of all workers at the beginning of the day/shift, including any other persons on the farm

## ISOLATION PLAN

- Employers of IAWs/TFWs should maintain **COVID-19 isolation plans** as they relate to IAWs/TFWs and their living setting in the event of a positive and/or symptomatic worker(s)
  - These isolation plans should be documented and incorporated into your safety plan
  - Provide both the safety and isolation plans to York Region Public Health at [Health.Inspectors@york.ca](mailto:Health.Inspectors@york.ca)
- Optimally, every positive case and associated close contacts should have their own enclosed room and dedicated washroom; however, each situation will be reviewed
- If sufficient isolation space is not available on-site, your plan will need to include off-site isolation accommodations (i.e., hotel, isolation centre, etc.). Employers are responsible for securing off-site isolation accommodations to prevent any further transmission on the farm
- Twice-daily health checks through a third-party should be completed to ensure the health and safety of workers in isolation (cases and contacts). Third-party health checks are to be completed by a [Registered Health Professional](#)

- Employers should include an escalation process for individuals identified by the third-party completing health checks with worsening symptoms and ensure timely access to appropriate health care supports in the community
- If a suspect or positive case is identified among workers in shared living settings and individual accommodations cannot be provided to cases and contacts, please contact York Region Public Health for isolation and cohorting recommendations

## ARRIVAL OF IAWs/TFWs AND QUARANTINE PLANS

Farm owners and temporary foreign workers should adhere to all applicable federal [legislation](#), including [The Quarantine Act](#). In addition:

- For the most up-to-date information on federal quarantine requirements, please check frequently with the [Government of Canada website](#)
- Upon arrival, eligible IAWs/TFWs can be immunized at the airport. York Region Public Health will provide vaccine and third doses for those that were missed after arrival. Please visit [york.ca/COVID19Vaccine](http://york.ca/COVID19Vaccine) for fourth dose eligibility and clinic information
- Fully vaccinated workers that were not tested at the airport and passed their active daily screening are not required to quarantine upon arrival; however, workers can attend [assessment centres](#) for testing upon arrival
- Workers that test positive on their arrival test must isolate immediately
- Any unvaccinated or partially vaccinated worker must quarantine for 14 days

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A SYMPTOMATIC OR POSITIVE WORKER

- If a worker experiences [symptoms](#) compatible with COVID-19 or fails the [daily screening](#), they must immediately [self-isolate](#) away from all other workers and personnel and contact York Region Public Health for further instruction
- In the event of a positive PCR or rapid antigen test (RAT), York Region Public Health must also be notified
- York Region owners/operators and workers in the agricultural sector, including settings where International Agricultural Workers have shared accommodations, are to report symptomatic or positive workers through [Agriculture Case and Contact Reporting Tool](#) or phone 1-877-464-9675.

## TESTING AND VACCINATION

- For information on COVID-19 assessment centres and other testing options, visit [york.ca/COVID19](http://york.ca/COVID19). Rapid antigen test kits (RATs) are available through Ontario Health; call Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653 ext. 4 for more information
- First, second, third and fourth doses of the COVID-19 vaccine are available at various clinics throughout York Region; visit [york.ca/COVID19Vaccine](http://york.ca/COVID19Vaccine) for eligibility and locations
- The [Staying Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines: Recommended Doses](#) and the [COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Recommendations](#) have been updated and are now available on the ministry's website.

# INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL REMINDERS

## Active screening

- Active screening, masking and personal protective equipment (PPE) are strongly recommended and expectations are outlined in the [Outbreak Guidance: Workplace and Living Settings for Seasonal International Agriculture Workers \(IAWs\)](#)
- All persons, including visitors and workers, seeking entry to an agri-food facility (except emergency first responders) should be actively screened, including temperature checks for COVID-19 symptoms and exposure history, regardless of their vaccination status
- Employers must have processes in place for daily active screening of all IAWs/TFWs in housing units, including temperature checks and symptom monitoring, regardless of whether they are working that day
- Employers must make screening results available for public health units, upon request. If an IAW/TFW fails screening, they must self-isolate and not work. Agri-food settings may choose to use or adapt the screening tools that have been developed by the Ministry of Health, such as:
  - [General COVID-19 Self-Assessment](#)
  - For workers specifically, [COVID-19 worker and employee screening](#)

## Masking

- Masking in common areas and during transportation is strongly recommended where physical distancing of two metres is not possible. Masking is still required on public transit until June 11<sup>th</sup>.

## Ventilation

- Where ventilation is inadequate or mechanical ventilation does not exist, the use of portable air cleaners can help filter out aerosols
- For more information, see Ontario Public Health's [Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning \(HVAC\) Systems in Buildings and COVID-19](#)
- Ventilation and filtration are important for overall indoor air quality as they help to dilute or reduce respiratory droplets and aerosols in a given space; however, they do not prevent transmission in close contact situations and need to be implemented as part of a comprehensive and layered strategy against COVID-19

## Cleaning and Disinfection

- Cleaning and disinfection should be done at least twice daily; frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected more often. A cleaning and disinfection log should be maintained. For an easy-to-follow guide, see ['Quick and Dirty' Guide to Cleaning & Disinfecting Surfaces on the Farm](#)
- To summarize, multiple prevention strategies are needed to prevent COVID-19. Please see [Layers of Prevention Against COVID-19](#).

## RESOURCES:

- [Outbreak Guidance: Workplace and Living Settings for Seasonal International Agriculture Workers \(IAWs\)](#)
- [Ministry of Health: COVID-19 Guidance Documents](#)
- [Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: Enhanced Agri-food Workplace Protection Program](#)
- [Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: OMAFRA COVID-19 Toolkit](#)