



2022 Seasonal Agricultural Workers COVID-19 Program Requirements

Summary of Changes for 2022

- The Section 22 Order issued to agricultural employers has been rescinded effective December 23, 2021.
- It is the responsibility of all agricultural employers to stay up-to-date with federal requirements regarding the need to isolate any incoming worker and follow the *Federal Quarantine Act* accordingly.
- Isolation plans **are no longer required** to be submitted or approved by the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit.
- The letter of instruction pertaining to travel from the airport to the farm has been revoked.
- Where a farmer is receiving seasonal agricultural workers who are required to isolate, the former “3-man rule” to an isolation unit has been lifted. Instead, farmers must follow all federal requirements for isolation.
- All isolation residences (if not a routinely inspected bunkhouse), will require an inspection by a Public Health Inspector prior to workers arriving if it has not already been inspected for the 2022 season.
- An extra ‘back-up’ unit in the event there is a sick and/or positive worker is no longer a requirement, but a strong recommendation.
- Employers are no longer required to submit worker arrival information to the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit.
- Employers are no longer required to submit wellness checks upon workers completing their isolation, as any isolated workers will be followed by the federal government accordingly.
- Employers do not have to submit incoming transfer information to the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit.
- As it pertains to all accommodations used to house seasonal agriculture workers for the 2022 season, where there is more than one bed in a sleeping area, **the strict 2m rule between beds has been removed, however it is still strongly recommended.**

Arrival at the Airport & Transportation to the Isolation Residence or Farm

It is important that all seasonal agriculture workers keep their physical distance from others upon arrival at the airport. Appropriate face masks/coverings are required to be worn at all times while in the airport and during transportation to their place of residence. All seasonal agriculture workers should bring with them a supply of hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) so that hand hygiene can be practiced as needed.

The 2021 letter of instruction regarding travel from airport to isolation locations has been **revoked**.

Agricultural employers who need to arrange travel for a combination of vaccinated and unvaccinated workers **must** transport these groups separately. Upon arrival to Canada, there should be no mixing of vaccinated workers and unvaccinated workers who are required to complete a mandatory isolation period.

Unvaccinated workers who are required to undergo mandatory isolation should not be permitted to utilize the F.A.R.M.S buses. However, employers can arrange their own travel. Public transportation is not permitted. If a bus or similar vehicle is utilized, the workers should be separated by two rows. If a private car is used, the workers should be in the back seat. Where weather permits, the windows should be open. Masks must be worn by all persons in the vehicle. A seating plan should be utilized and documented.

Vaccinated workers who are not required to undergo mandatory isolation may utilize the F.A.R.M.S buses to transport from the airport to the farm, however it is **strongly recommended** that agricultural employers arrange for their own transportation of their workers.

Rationale: The rationale for the recommendation to arrange for your own farm worker's transportation and transport vaccinated workers separately from unvaccinated workers is that a positive worker has potential repercussions for everyone they travel with, regardless of what farm they are going to. It is important to note that under current Ministry guidance, **one** positive worker on a farm is considered an outbreak and currently all close contacts would need to isolate, regardless of vaccination status.

Isolation Requirements

Due to the new Omicron variant and trying to prevent further spread of COVID-19 the government of Canada has implemented new rules for those entering Canada by air. As of December 1, 2021, fully vaccinated travelers entering Canada will be required to take an arrival test and isolate until results are received (usually 1 to 2 days). Unvaccinated travelers entering Canada are still required to complete the arrival test, Day 8 test and the full 14-day mandatory quarantine period.

If you are receiving a combination of vaccinated and unvaccinated workers on the same flight, these two groups are not permitted to isolate together due to unvaccinated workers needing to quarantine for the full 14-days whereas vaccinated individuals only need to quarantine until arrival test results are received.

It is important to note that the federal quarantine requirements could change at any given time, therefore it is the responsibility of the employer to keep up-to-date on any and all requirements for isolation upon entry to Canada. Subsequently, isolation plans must adhere to all current federal requirements at the time the workers are isolating.

An isolation residence may be a bunkhouse, trailer, hotel or motel. The agricultural employer may choose to utilize one or multiple types of residences. These residences can be located on the farm or at a remote location.

Some items for consideration are listed below:

- Workers subject to quarantine may isolate together in a bunkhouse or trailer as long as 2 metres of physical distancing can be maintained at all times (in bedrooms, kitchen, washrooms and common areas), but must not exceed the permitted occupancy for the isolation unit where a bunkhouse or trailer is used.
- When developing isolation plans, consideration should be given to how many workers you are comfortable isolating together. Keep in mind that if there is a positive worker in the isolation unit, **ALL** workers residing with that individual will be impacted. This can cause prolonged isolation and a delay in them being able to start working.

- Where there is more than one bed in a bedroom, 2 metres between beds (frame-to-frame) is required as per federal rules. Physical markings should be used to visually indicate this 2 metres space requirement has been achieved. It is important that workers be informed not to move beds during this time.
- As per federal rules, bunk beds must **not** be used during the quarantine period.
- Where a hotel room will be used as an isolation residence, one worker per room is permitted as the 2 metre required spacing as per federal rules cannot be achieved in this setting.
- Isolation plans should include how the farm will ensure all required supplies such as food, water, medicine and other personal items will be provided to the workers during their mandatory isolation period.
- Each worker must be provided with food consumption supplies such as plates, cups and utensils. These supplies must not be shared with others.
- Workers must be provided with household cleaning and hand hygiene supplies.
- During isolation, workers must have the means to contact a member of the farm at any hour if there is an urgent matter.
- Signage should be posted in all applicable languages with contact information for the appointed farm contact and 911.
- Workers must be informed on how to report COVID symptoms to the appointed farm contact and signage should be available in the isolation unit explaining the most current signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

COVID Recommendations Outside of Isolation

Outside of all federal isolation requirements, please consider the following COVID-19 recommendations:

- The 2021 requirement to have all beds spaced at least 2 metres apart frame-to-frame with no exceptions has been removed, however it is still **strongly** recommended.
 - Decreasing the space between beds may increase the risk of viral transmission between workers.
 - Consideration should be given to current pandemic situation when evaluating sleeping arrangements (for example, new Omicron variant is more transmissible therefore, may want to keep beds spaced as far apart as possible and limit use of bunkbeds then re-evaluate later in the season).
- If the 2 metres of spacing between beds is not possible, **consider** different strategies to keep workers apart such as:
 - Placing beds head to foot or foot to foot
 - Using temporary barriers between beds
 - Avoiding the use of bunkbeds as much as possible
- Continue to monitor the health of your workers. Be sure they are comfortable with reporting any new symptoms and know who to notify.
- Consider having a 'back-up' unit available to immediately move a sick and/or positive worker to. If one is not available on-farm, the farm should include within their COVID-19 safety plan how a sick and/or positive worker will be separated immediately from others (i.e. moved to a hotel).
- Encourage your workers to practice hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and social distancing.
- Workers should continue to avoid sharing household items (e.g. utensils, cups, bedding, and towels) as well as not sharing cigarettes, vaping products or other items exposed to saliva/respiratory droplets.

- Schedule meals, showers and laundry times to limit the number of workers in a room.
- Ensure workers have the supplies (e.g. toiletries, cleaning products) and direction needed to frequently clean and disinfect surfaces. High touch surfaces such as door handles, light switches, faucets, TV remotes, phones, and counters should be frequently cleaned and disinfected.
- Continue to transport workers in a manner that helps with social distancing. If transported by bus the workers should be separated by two rows. If a private car is used, the workers should be in the back seat with the windows open (if possible).
- Ensure your workers are aware of any COVID-19 restrictions in the community.
- Keep your workers informed of the changing situation.

Reporting a Sick Worker

If a worker reports having COVID-19 symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath:

- a) Ensure the individual stops working immediately and is isolated.
- b) Notify the health unit by calling 519-426-6170 ext. 9999. After business hours, call 1-877-298-5888.
- c) Arrange for a COVID test at your closest testing/assessment centre.
- d) Ensure there is adequate food and water provided for the worker.
- e) If you need to take the ill worker to the hospital, call ahead to report to the medical facility before taking them to the medical facility. This allows the medical facility to make arrangements for a suspect COVID-19 case. When transporting them to the hospital:
 - i. The ill worker should sit in the back seat of the vehicle.
 - ii. Only one person and the ill worker should be in the vehicle.
 - iii. Lower the windows, if possible.
 - iv. Masks must be worn by the ill worker and by the driver.
- f) If the worker tests positive for COVID-19, a list of close contacts must be provided to the health unit upon request.
- g) Positive individuals must isolate for a period of 10 days from onset of symptoms or their date of test in absence of symptoms.
- h) Close contacts that are part of a congregate settings (for ex., other workers who shared a bunkhouse with the positive) must isolate for a period of 10 days from their last date of exposure to the positive worker, regardless of vaccination status.
- i) If the worker's symptoms last for more than 10 days, the worker should remain isolated until 24 hours after the symptoms have resolved.
- j) The worker must be cleared to return to work or leave the country by the health unit.

Websites of Importance

Guidance for Employers of Temporary Foreign Workers Regarding COVID-19 (Federal):

www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/foreign-workers/employer-compliance/covid-guidance.html

Covid-19: Farmer Toolkit:

www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-farmer-toolkit#section-4

Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit – COVID-19 for Seasonal Workers:

www.hnhu.org/health-topic/coronavirus-covid19/covid-19-farms/

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