

## COVID-19 FAQ and other information

### Statement (ARMS # 031320-02)

There is a great deal of uncertainty about the ongoing impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on the beef industry and the United States as a whole. At this time, it's impossible to measure the full effects of the virus or determine how it may continue to unfold. Although the full beef supply chain is being challenged by the outbreak, all segments of the industry are working closely together and must continue to do so. The current uncertainty facing beef producers is shared by all of agriculture and every American.

As Coronavirus has spread in the United States, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), a contractor to the Beef Checkoff, has been in communication with every sector of the beef supply chain. Every one of these operations is facing unique challenges and many shared burdens. As we continue to work through this crisis, we will do everything in our power to safeguard the beef industry. Consumer demand for beef remains strong, and producers across the industry remain ready to provide the safe, delicious, high-quality protein that's required and desired around the globe.

NCBA will continue to work with our members and partners throughout the beef supply chain to facilitate communication. By working together, every segment of the beef community can serve a role in returning the industry to normalcy as quickly as possible.

## FAQ

- Can I become sick with COVID-19 from food? (<https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus>)
  - USDA is not aware of any reports at this time of human illnesses that suggest COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or food packaging. However, it is always important to follow [good hygiene practices](#) (i.e., wash hands and surfaces often, separate raw meat from other foods, cook to the right temperature, and refrigerate foods promptly) when handling or preparing foods.<sup>i</sup>
- Are meat products compromised by COVID-19? (<https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus>)
  - USDA is not aware of any reports at this time of human illnesses that suggest COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or food packaging. However, it is always important to follow [good hygiene practices](#) (i.e., wash hands and surfaces often, separate raw meat from other foods, cook to the right temperature, and refrigerate foods promptly) when handling or preparing foods.<sup>vi</sup>
- Are food products produced in the United States a risk for the spread of COVID-19? (<https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus>)
  - There is no evidence to suggest that food produced in the United States can transmit COVID-19.<sup>vi</sup>
- Can I get sick with COVID-19 from touching food, the food packaging, or food contact surfaces, if the coronavirus was present on it? (<https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus>)
  - Currently there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19. Like other viruses, it is possible that the virus that causes

COVID-19 can survive on surfaces or objects. For that reason, it is critical to follow the 4 key steps of food safety — clean, separate, cook, and chill.<sup>vi</sup>

- If an inspector or worker in a meat processing plant became infected with coronavirus, would the meat produced at that facility be safe to eat? (<https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus>)
  - Public health and food safety experts do not have any evidence to suggest that COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or food packaging. FSIS in-plant personnel who are ill with COVID-19 or any other illness will be excluded from work activities that could create unsanitary conditions (coughing or sneezing on product). COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets that can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. More information about how the virus spread is available from the CDC ([www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html)).<sup>vi</sup>
- What is USDA doing to ensure access to food? (<https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus>)
  - USDA is monitoring the situation closely in collaboration with our federal and state partners. FNS is ready to assist in the government-wide effort to ensure all Americans have access to food in times of need. In the event of an emergency or disaster situation, Food and Nutrition Service programs are just one part of a much larger government-wide coordinated response. All of our programs, including SNAP, WIC, and the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, have flexibilities and contingencies built-in to allow us to respond to on-the-ground realities and take action as directed by Congress.<sup>vi</sup>
- Are animals responsible for COVID-19 in people?
  - The predominant route of transmission of COVID-19 appears to be from human to human.<sup>i</sup>
  - According to the CDC, there is no evidence that companion animals, including pets can spread COVID-19.
  - Current evidence suggests that the COVID-19 virus has an animal source. Ongoing investigations are important for identifying the animal source. To date, there is not enough scientific evidence to identify that source or to explain the route of transmission from an animal source to humans.<sup>ii</sup>
- Can the bovine coronavirus vaccine be used to treat people?
  - Bovine coronavirus is **NOT** the same as COVID-19.
  - There is no evidence to suggest that the bovine coronavirus vaccine has any effect on humans or the COVID-19 strain. Vaccines are developed and tested for specific strains of viruses and species and should only be used according to label instructions.<sup>iii, iv</sup>
  - The bovine coronavirus, as the name suggests, is specific to cattle and other domestic animals (i.e., horses, water buffalo, deer, elk, etc.). There is no cross protection between bovine coronavirus and COVID-19.<sup>ii, iii</sup>
  - There are currently no antiviral drugs recommended or licensed by FDA to treat COVID-19, and there is no immunization available.<sup>v</sup>
- Will beef from cattle vaccinated for bovine coronavirus help build immunity against COVID-19?
  - There is no evidence to suggest that this is the case.
  - Even if a vaccine for bovine coronavirus is used in cattle, there is a 21-day or 60-day meat withdrawal period, depending on the vaccine, required prior to processing. This

ensures the end product is safe for consumption and no medication would be present in the beef.<sup>vi</sup>

- What impact is COVID-19 having on the beef supply?
  - Cattle farmers and ranchers continue to produce high-quality beef.
  - As COVID-19 continues to spread and impact economic activity, there is a great deal of uncertainty in terms of what it means for the beef industry, including on supply and demand.
  - At this time, it's impossible to measure the full effects of the virus or determine how it may continue to unfold.
  
- How does bovine coronavirus affect cattle?<sup>ii, iii</sup>
  - Bovine coronavirus is a cattle virus that farmers and ranchers have vaccinated their cattle against and managed for years. It can manifest as either a respiratory infection or gastrointestinal disease in cattle of all ages.
  - Gastrointestinal signs include profuse diarrhea, dehydration, depression, reduced weight gain and anorexia.
  - Bovine coronavirus has been associated with upper and lower respiratory tract disease and is a component of Bovine Respiratory Disease Complex. Signs may include respiratory distress, fever, nasal discharge, and coughing.
  - Like other viral infections, other factors can influence an animal's risk of infection and its ability to overcome the infection. These include host factors such as immunologic status or coinfections with a secondary bacterial infection and environmental factors such as extreme cold or hot temperatures.
  
- How do farmers and ranchers care for the cattle if they are sick with bovine coronavirus? **(from ARMS approved document #092518-02)**<sup>v</sup>
  - Farmers and ranchers use a variety of tools, including vaccines, good nutrition programs, low-stress handling, and proper housing to keep animals healthy.
  - If necessary, antibiotics may be a tool that farmers and ranchers use to treat an animal.
  - Beef farmers and ranchers work with veterinarians and animal health experts to ensure antibiotics are used responsibly.
  - The beef community has significantly invested in educational programs, like Beef Quality Assurance and research to maintain high standards of animal care and health, including continuously improving the stewardship of antibiotics used in cattle.
  
- What is Beef Quality Assurance (BQA)? **(from ARMS approved document #090919-06)**<sup>v</sup>
  - Developed in 1991, Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) is a voluntary certification program that provides the U.S. beef industry with a consistent set of animal welfare standards and best practices.
  - The BQA program exemplifies what beef farmers and ranchers have always cared about – a commitment to caring for their animals and providing families with the safest and highest-quality beef possible.
  - Consumers can feel good knowing there's a national program in place that sets consistent animal welfare and care standards across the beef industry. The result is wholesome safe, high-quality meat.

- More than 85 percent of the beef supply in the U.S. comes from farms and ranches that adhere to BQA standards and guidelines, and this number continues to increase monthly.
- The BQA program is nationally coordinated by the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA), a contractor to the Beef Checkoff.
- Can companion animals spread COVID-19? (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/interim-guidance-managing-people-in-home-care-and-isolation-who-have-pets.html>)
  - At this time, there is no evidence that companion animals, including pets, can spread COVID-19.<sup>vii</sup>

**General Food Safety (USDA FSIS website)**

- The United States has worked hard to generate one of the safest food supplies in the world. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is the agency responsible for ensuring that the commercial supply of meat, poultry and egg products in the U.S. is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged.
- The Federal Meat Inspection Act requires USDA inspectors to provide inspection of live cattle before entering a federally-regulated establishments. Inspectors also oversee where beef is cut and packaged and the finished meat products are prepared for shipment to their final destinations.
- FSIS inspectors utilize numerous tools, tests, and levels of federal inspection to assure product safety. These safety procedures involve collecting and analyzing food samples for harmful bacteria, foodborne pathogens and chemical contamination.

**Food Safety At Home ([https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/freezing-and-food-safety/CT\\_Index](https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/freezing-and-food-safety/CT_Index))**

- Properly store raw beef in the fridge or freezer. Keep raw beef cold until time of preparation. Try to use fresh beef within two days; otherwise freeze until needed. (You can freeze beef in its original packaging up to two weeks. For longer storage, wrap in heavy-duty aluminum foil or in plastic freezer bags, removing as much air as possible.)
- If frozen, defrost beef in refrigerator (allow at least a day by placing frozen package on a plate or tray to catch any juices), microwave oven, as part of cooking, or under cold running water. Never thaw or defrost beef at room temperature.
- To avoid potential cross-contamination during preparation, cooking surfaces should be kept clean and separate utensils should be used to handle raw beef. Hands and utensils should be washed with soap and warm water.
- All ground meat products should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160F, using an instant read meat thermometer. Roasts and steaks should be cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 145F and allowed to rest for at least 3 minutes.
- Wash your hands before and after handling raw beef with soap and warm water (lather for at least 20 seconds or sing the “happy birthday” song twice).

- Be sure to wrap or store leftovers in airtight containers promptly after serving (within two hours after cooking). Keep refrigerated and use within three days.

### General Nutrition

- When we face uncertainty or adversity in our lives, focusing on health-promoting things we can control can help. Enjoying healthful well-balanced meals, making time for physical activity (outdoors when possible), getting plenty of rest, and spending quality time with loved ones are healthy habits that can get us over a hump.
- Nutrient-rich foods are a foundation for nourishing yourself and your family. Beef's essential nutrients like high-quality protein, zinc, iron, selenium and B-vitamins are important for maintaining good health so you can feel more prepared to take on what life throws at you.
- Maintaining a balanced diet with nutrient rich foods, like beef, can promote a healthy body and immune system.
- The protein in beef supports proper function of the brain and immune system<sup>viii,ix, x, xi</sup> and zinc supports a strong immune system, which helps to fortify your body to fight infection and disease.<sup>xii</sup>
- Beef. It's What's for Dinner. is a great resource providing tasty, nutritious recipes and nutrition information for you and your family.

### Other statements for reference

**USDA Ensures Food Safety During COVID-19 Outbreak** (Washington, D.C., March 17, 2020) <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2020/03/17/usda-ensures-food-safety-during-covid-19-outbreak>

**USDA Announces Feeding Program Partnership in Response to COVID-19**  
*Collaboration will provide nearly 1,000,000 meals a week to rural children*  
(Washington, D.C., March 17, 2020) <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2020/03/17/usda-announces-feeding-program-partnership-response-covid-19>

**USDA Working with Private Sector in Response to COVID-19**  
(Washington, D.C., March 17, 2020) <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2020/03/17/usda-working-private-sector-response-covid-19>

**Secretary Perdue Statement on President Trump's Declaration of National Emergency Regarding COVID-19** (Washington, D.C., March 13, 2020) <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2020/03/13/secretary-perdue-statement-president-trumps-declaration-national>

**Secretary Perdue Statement on President Trump’s Address to the Nation Regarding COVID-19**  
(Washington, D.C., March 12, 2020) <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2020/03/12/secretary-perdue-statement-president-trumps-address-nation>

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus> accessed March 16, 2020.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.oie.int/en/scientific-expertise/specific-information-and-recommendations/questions-and-answers-on-2019-novel-coronavirus/> accessed March 16, 2020.

<sup>iii</sup> Boileau, M. & Kapil, S. (2010). Bovine Coronavirus Associated Syndromes. *Veterinary Clinics of North America Food Animal Practice*. Mar 26(1): 123-46. doi: 10.1016/j.cvfa.2009.10.003.

<sup>iv</sup> MacLachlan, N.J. & Dubovi, E.J. (2017). Coronaviridae. *Fenner’s Veterinary Virology, 5<sup>th</sup> edition*. (pp. 435-461). Elsevier Inc.

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19> accessed March 16, 2020.

<sup>vi</sup> <https://www.bqa.org> accessed March 16, 2020.

<sup>vii</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/interim-guidance-managing-people-in-home-care-and-isolation-who-have-pets.html> accessed March 16, 2020

<sup>viii</sup> Michaelsen KF, Greer FR. Protein needs early in life and long-term health. *Am J Clin Nutr* 2014;99:718S22S.

<sup>ix</sup> Prado EL & Dewey KG. Nutrition and brain development in early life. *Nutr Rev* 2014;72:267–84.

<sup>x</sup> Bourre JM. Effects of nutrients (in food) on the structure and function of the nervous system: update on dietary requirements for brain. Part 1: micronutrients. *J Nutr Health Aging* 2006;10:377-85.

<sup>xi</sup> Moore K, et al. Diet, nutrition and the ageing brain: current evidence and new directions. *Proc Nutr Soc* 2018;77:152-63

<sup>xii</sup> Wessels I, et al. Zinc as a gatekeeper of immune function. *Nutrients* 2017;9:E1286.