

## Frequently Asked Questions About Coronavirus March 19, 2020

### **What should I do if I or one of my family members contracts Coronavirus and we are unable to take care of our animals? Who can help?**

Beef producers have always supported each other through natural disasters and tough times and now is no different. First and foremost, follow the [CDC](#) guidelines for protecting yourself, your family, your community and your employees from the Coronavirus. [Here](#) are the President's Coronavirus Guidelines for America to help slow the spread.

While this might seem to be a "big city" issue, it has the potential to greatly impact rural communities as well. Beef producers know a little common sense can go a long way!

Talk to your neighbors and establish a plan to help care for livestock should there be a confirmed case. If you have hired help, take measures to ensure their safety, but also see if they'd be willing to take on extra work to help neighbors as needed. Call upon your state cattlemen's organization as many can offer assistance and organize help for their members.

### **How can I best be prepared for feeding my animals if there are disruptions or weather events that might affect my ability to obtain feed?**

Producers are used to being prepared to feed their animals in the face of weather and other disruptions. Distribution of feed to local feed stores and mills could potentially be impacted by labor and import issues. Check with your local dealers or reps and see what plans they have in place. Your state cattlemen's associations can step in and organize assistance. Some state governments may have systems in place to offer help as well. And as we've seen before in the face of fires, drought and other natural disasters producers from around the country have rallied to help move feed to needed areas. Be in touch with your neighbors to see who might need what in the way of feed and or help. Here is a website that offers resources in response to natural and other disasters: <http://www.prep4agthreats.org/index.php>

### **What rural resources are available to help answer questions about Coronavirus?**

While the national media has focused the impact of the coronavirus outbreak in urban and sub-urban areas, the potential to impact rural communities remains very real. And with these communities having limited resources to health care and other critical services, it could be even more of a stress on local communities. Take the necessary measures to protect yourselves and your families. [Here](#) is a link to resources for rural communities.

### **What resources are available for the farming and ranching community to help with the stress this impact will cause?**

Farmers and ranchers are not only facing the stress of the economic uncertainty surrounding the coronavirus, but also scrutiny from the consumers they are providing food and fiber to. But farmers and ranchers are going to be among the most critical professions as the country deals with and rebounds from the coronavirus epidemic. There are many resources available to

producers and rural communities to help with stress and other mental health issues. Below are some links:

The [Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network \(FRSAN\)](#) establishes a network to connect farmers, ranchers, and other agriculturalists to stress assistance programs.

The [Employee and Family Assistance Program \(EFAP\)](#) provides immediate and confidential support to resolve work, health, and life challenges

[Make It OK](#) is a campaign to reduce the stigma of mental illnesses and includes resources for rural crisis prevention

None of us know the long-lasting impact of this pandemic, but we do know it will cause a lot of mental, physical and emotional stress along the way. DON'T be afraid to talk with your family and friends about your feelings and ask how they are too. Be there for each other. The world needs those that provide food healthy and strong!

### **For producers facing economic hardship as a result of Coronavirus, what resources are available?**

These are unprecedented times and many organizations are trying to adjust as needed. Talk to your local lender and see what is available from them. Continue to visit NBCA's webpage for [information and resources](#). NCBA is continuing to engage with the Administration as they evolve and pass coronavirus stimulus packages. NCBA has sent a letter to the White House outlining the upcoming needs of beef producers. We have asked for additional avenues of flexibility in terms of existing loans and requirements to remove burden from producers, as well as access to new, low or no interest loans so that beef producers can keep operating and sustain their operations moving forward. The stimulus package is a rapidly unfolding situation and NCBA will continue to provide updates. NCBA's focus will remain in protecting agriculture and the beef industry in any stimulus package. [Here](#) is the letter NCBA sent to the White House.

### **What are ag lenders doing and what resources have they/are they making available?**

At this time, it is our understanding that many ag lenders are already working on a case by case basis, but they may not know what is going to be available through government channels yet. The best thing you can do is contact your lender directly and don't be afraid to ask them questions and let them know your needs. This can help them serve you better as the situation evolves and funds become available to producers.

### **If I have an upcoming sale in the next 30-60 days, what considerations should I be weighing?**

If you have an upcoming sale planned it is important to be aware of the recommendations to avoid gatherings of more than ten people. This will affect not only viewing of the cattle offerings, but any other events planned around the sale, such as meals or evening socials. Consider canceling any events except the auction itself. Use social media as a way to post short videos of the cattle you're selling and encourage comments from interested buyers. Offer as many ways to bid as possible if you are going to limit the size of in-person buyers. Increase the ability to handle phone bids and consider an on-line auction company to assist. Consider also the number of employees or sale day help you need in order to limit personal contact and crowd size. Contact your breed association to help you communicate any updates as your sale date approaches, including

postponements or cancellations due to the ever changing state and federal restrictions. While it is financially detrimental to miss out on the social and business interactions that normally occur during sale season it is important to limit risk to your business, employees, customers, family, community, and the beef industry as a whole during these times.

**If we continue ahead with the sale, what considerations should we consider to limit risk?**

If you continue ahead with your sale, continue to check with local, state and federal health departments and governments on the ever-changing suggestions and restrictions regarding public gatherings and interactions. It is important that the beef industry support these institutions in slowing the spread of the virus and adhere to their recommendations. As far as limiting risk in regard to sale price for the cattle, contact your breed association's regional representative, they'll be a good source in helping market your cattle for the best price possible. Talk with other producers and brainstorm creative, outside the box marketing options. Utilize [CattleFax](#) and the tools they have available as well.

**Can online auctions/video markets help producers with upcoming sales?**

There are many online and video market companies that have been hosting video sales for some time. Utilizing online and video marketing services at this time is another way to help market and sell your cattle while minimizing the impact of the corona virus. Here is a list of some companies that can help:

[Superior Livestock Auction](#)

[Western Video Market](#)

[DV Auction](#)

[Southeast Livestock Exchange](#)

[LiveAuctions.tv](#)

[CattleUSA](#)

[Northern Livestock Video Auction](#)

In addition, many breed associations have great tools to help both seedstock and commercial producers in marketing cattle. Visit their websites or give them a call to explore available options.

**Can NCBA put forward a marketing piece to help promote upcoming sales or upcoming drafts of cattle coming to markets to members and other prospective buyers?**

NCBA has created a free sale calendar listing for use by anyone with an upcoming bull or livestock sale. We will continue to share these events with our members and on our social media channels. You can find or list an upcoming sale here: <https://www.ncba.org/upcomingsales.aspx>

## **How are livestock auction markets operating considering the virus, are there considerations cattle producers need to be aware of prior to taking animals to the auction?**

Given the current recommendations for limiting public gatherings many livestock markets may put restrictions on attendance at auctions and limit operations of their cafes or foodservices. While the sale barn or livestock auction market will likely ask you to minimize the time you spend at the market or sale arena, many will have plans for unloading cattle to minimize risk to market employees and consignors. Phone bidding and web broadcast will be options for buyers and the barn may ask to mail you your check instead of having you pick it up in person. Check with your local market or follow their social media platforms to stay up to date on their current operating procedures and requests.

## **Does LMA have advice for cattle producers?**

Livestock Marketing Association (LMA) is actively following the changing guidance for businesses and working with federal and state officials to ensure continuity of livestock auction markets. They are also discussing with them assistance for markets and producers in the weeks and months to come as the market adjusts to the current situation. For the latest from the Livestock Marketing Association and their recommendations for livestock markets regarding COVID-19 visit their website [here](#).

## **What resources do extension services have to provide?**

Extension services will continue to play a coordination role locally and are excellent sources of information as the situation evolves. However, be aware that many extension specialists may not be working out of the local office, but rather remotely, per the direction of the University. Check websites for updates and contact information for local agents. Here is a website that might also be helpful: <https://extensiondisaster.net/>

## **If I am wanting to selling beef direct to consumers, what considerations do I need to account for?**

The most important consideration in the sale of any food item is first and foremost food safety! Keep frozen beef frozen to below zero degrees Fahrenheit, and keep raw beef chilled to below 40 degrees Fahrenheit in accordance with USDA standards for storage. Make sure you communicate to your customer proper storage and preparation to avoid any potential pitfalls (illness due to mishandling or undercooked beef, etc.) The website [www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com](http://www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com) is a great place to point them for recipes as well as cooking instructions and safe storage and handling techniques. It's important to arm your customer with as much information as possible. Here are some other good resources for you and your customers:

[https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/keep-food-safe-food-safety-basics/ct\\_index](https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/keep-food-safe-food-safety-basics/ct_index)

[https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/safe-minimum-internal-temperature-chart/ct\\_index](https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/safe-minimum-internal-temperature-chart/ct_index)

During this time of limited social interactions, it is also important to consider how and where you will sell your products. In order to minimize contact for you and your customer can you offer mail order options? If you are shipping your product it is critical that it is packaged properly with ice to

ensure the meat stay at a safe temperature for the duration of transportation. Please be aware that there could be disruptions and delays in shipping under current circumstances. If delivering a product, coordinate that someone will be there to receive it, even if it is left outside a door, so the product doesn't get compromised. Does your local processor offer locker options that you can utilize? Are you going to offer fresh and frozen or just frozen to ensure safety and a longer shelf life? Be sure to communicate as much information as you can to your customer to protect your business and limit your liability! Turn to [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov) for additional food supply chain resources.

#### **How are small meat processors affected by the virus outbreak?**

Labor may be an issue for smaller plants. Check directly with your local processor before taking any animal in to be processed to make sure that they can fulfill your order.

#### **What will happen if larger scale quarantines or travel restrictions are put in place, limiting movement of animals?**

The Department of Transportation (DOT) has announced an hours of service emergency waiver for commercial trucks including those delivering food products. DOT also announced Hours of Service waiver for all hauling of livestock from March 13 – April 12, 2020. No documentation in the truck will be needed. Be sure to check the [DOT](http://DOT) website for the most current requirements or waivers. NCBA will continue to monitor and engage on this issue to keep cattle and beef moving through the supply chain. Follow NCBA on social media channels and check back to the website often for updates as the situation evolves.

#### **What current biosecurity plans are in place at feedlots?**

In addition to keeping cattle in feedlots fed and healthy, yards are increasing their focus on keeping employees safe, healthy and available for work. So far what we're hearing is that some yards are asking employees to limit travel, whether business or personal, and encouraging all protocols recommended to slow the spread of the virus. Most support industries – feed, nutritionist, animal health – have also limited travel for their employees, so additional people coming into the yards has decreased. Cleaning and disinfecting of shared workspaces have increased in accordance with CDC recommendations and there's enhanced bio-security protocol for drivers on arrival if interaction with yard employees is required. The positive news is that marketing and shipments continue as normal and the USDA has remained committed to keeping inspectors in plants to maintain the movement of the beef supply chain.

#### **Do we know whether the virus can be transmitted to cattle or horses? Can it be passed from cattle or horses to humans as a means of transmission?**

At this time there is no evidence that COVID-19 can be transmitted to cattle or horses and from those species to humans.

#### **Are packing plants planning to close or reduce operations in light of the coronavirus?**

As with any business, packing plants are working to ensure worker health and safety so that employees can continue to work, and plants can continue to operate. They are working on contingency plans in the event employees become ill. USDA remains committed to keeping the food supply chain safely operating. Inspectors and graders will continue to be in plants doing their

job. In the event of sick or exposed employees the USDA has contingency plans in place to keep inspections going. This is an ongoing situation, and NCBA will stay engaged with USDA and the packers as the situation evolves.

### **How is the restaurant sector responding to the virus outbreak?**

Many states have restricted how restaurants, including fast casual and fast food chains, can operate, essentially shutting down all dine-in business. Many of these businesses are still offering takeout, delivery and drive-thru options. In addition, many foodservice companies are taking extra measures in cleaning and disinfecting and implementing other protocols in accordance to their state and local health departments. It is still unknown how the coronavirus will impact the foodservice supply chain and industry, although the impact could be significant. Many organizations continue to monitor developments.

### **Why are markets declining when the boxed beef price remains only slightly lower and beef is nearly unavailable at the retail level, indicating that consumers are buying in large quantity?**

Given the high demand of beef in the retail sector, futures contract prices on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange are not reflective of the high retail demand for beef that we're currently witnessing. However, it's important to remember that hotel and restaurant sector demand, which is responsible for significant purchases of high-quality beef, has seen massive demand destruction, offsetting the strength of retail demand. That said, NCBA has asked the nation's four major packers and the North American Meat Institute to act aggressively in the markets and base their pricing on retail levels rather than futures contract prices. Futures markets are looking forward and clearly reflect concern about a major recession both in the US and around the globe. At present no one really knows what that means or how beef demand will be affected. NCBA is continuing to monitor the situation and will continue to do everything in its power to protect markets in the U.S. and abroad from pricing shocks. For more information, [here](#) is the letter NCBA sent to NAMI and the four major beef processors.

### **What can I do to protect my equity in my animals at this time?**

With the quick drop to the futures market managing risk and protecting equity is difficult. [CattleFax](#) recommends producers be in communication with their lender so everyone has the same understanding as to what their current financial situation looks like relative to the value of what the futures are pricing daily.