

Practical Measures to Reduce Risk of COVID-19 Spread for Essential Aquaculture Operations

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The aim of this document is to provide practical measures that the aquaculture industry can put in place to protect staff and reduce risks to their homes and families while continuing essential operations. It covers assessing and implementing measures to reduce risk of spreading COVID-19 at work, travelling to and from work, and at home.

We must remember that it is a privilege that we are able to continue essential operations to keep our animals alive and well and to continue to produce safe nutritious seafood for NZ and the world.

We must now do everything we can to reduce risks to our staff, their families, and NZ.

We don't want to be the industry that is seen to be putting NZ at risk.

Companies must operate under new conditions. This is **NOT** business as usual.

You will need to decide what operations are 'Non-Essential' and can be put on hold to protect your business and staff.

Then list 'Essential' operations, and assess the risks involved in each step.

MPI have set up an online system to register your essential services:

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/covid-19-essential-primary-sector-service-registration/>

By now you should have registered as an Essential Service on the MPI website.

For additional resources to help with planning and protocols go to the AQNZ COVID-19 webpage:

<https://www.aquaculture.org.nz/covid-19/>

As part of the registration process you will have provided details of how you are going to ensure the prevention of the spread of the virus. If you need to update your submission, you can email the following address with your new information: info@mpi.govt.nz or phone MPI on: 0800 00 83 33

Once you have registered and have your protocols in place you can continue to operate. You do not need to wait for approval of your protocols, but you must implement them immediately. MPI will be inspecting and auditing businesses on-site to ensure you are implementing your protocols – including on farms and vessels.

Bubble / zone concept

You can consider each of your staff are now isolated in their home bubble / zone.

By going to work to do essential services, and interacting with others at work, they are adding a level of risk to their home bubble.

There are other risks to that home bubble if your staff are sharing accommodations with other people that are going to work in other essential services, have high-risk health issues, or live with people who are in high-risk categories.

It will be important to assess these risks for each staff member as the level of risk will depend on their home bubble / zone situation.

You will need to go through these risks with each staff member and talk through the advice below with them.

Understanding their home situation will be critical to you understanding the level of risk each staff member poses to your operation / work zone and vice versa.

We recommend documenting each step you are taking to assess staff risk.

After a risk assessment, some staff are likely to be deemed too great a risk and should be stood down.

Consider getting your staff to sign a declaration form to state that they have been advised of the protocols and will always comply.

An example declaration form can be found in the AQNZ Resource for Employers in Essential Services document: <https://www.aquaculture.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Resource-for-employers-in-essential-services.pdf>).

Essential operations: a safe work zone

The government has provided information and guidance for employers around measures that you will have to put in place to keep your staff safe from spreading COVID-19 within the work zone.

<https://covid19.govt.nz/help-and-advice/for-businesses-and-organisations/employers/>

<https://www.employment.govt.nz/about/news-and-updates/workplace-response-coronavirus-covid-19/#guidance>

You must consider what parts of the business/operation are essential and only continue with essential operations.

Social distancing is imperative to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

A 2-metre distance separation between staff must always be maintained.

If it is not possible to maintain a 2-metre separation due to space or for health and safety reasons, staff must be able to maintain at least a 1-metre distance separation and be provided with a minimum Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) of face masks and gloves.

If it is not possible to maintain at least a 1-metre separation between staff wearing PPE of face masks and gloves, you must modify operations or stop operations.

Much of this information has been adapted from that developed by Cathy Webb at Seafood NZ.

Practical measures for the workplace in general:

- Implement procedures to assess the COVID-19 risk of any personnel (including staff) coming on-site (e.g. have they travelled in the last 14 days; have they had close-contact with or been exposed to someone who has COVID-19; are they in the high-risk category (age, health conditions, what are their home living situations)?
- Ban all non-essential staff from coming on-farm/on-board or on-site, that includes contractors unless required to complete essential or emergency repairs. Any staff that can work from home must do so. Only staff essential to the operations should be allowed on-site.
- Put in place procedures for receiving deliveries
 - ensure distancing between the delivery staff and receiving staff
 - wash hands after touching surfaces of delivery items
- Record details of all personnel entering the site by time and date:
 - including any essential contractors and all staff, record their contact details and the areas they have or will work in
 - ensure hands are washed or disinfected before entering the site / vessel
- Minimise the time before and after shifts that staff can be on-site:
 - For example, staff to arrive no more than 10 minutes before start of shift and stay no longer than 10 minutes after
- If possible, stagger shift start/finish times to minimise the number of staff able to congregate in any one area.
- If possible, implement smaller teams, and team separation within shifts, so that if a staff member within a team shows symptoms of COVID-19, that team goes into self-isolation but the rest of the shift teams may be able to continue after the site undergoes a thorough cleaning process.
- Stagger breaks so that teams maintain separation.

- Enforce strict, regular hand washing (wash with hand-soap and running water for a minimum of 20 seconds, dry thoroughly with disposable paper towels), and use hand-sanitiser, including:
 - Before stepping into a facility or on-board a vessel
 - After visiting the toilet
 - Before eating
 - After smoking/vaping
 - Before putting on protective clothing, including face mask and gloves, and after removing face mask and gloves
 - Before handling any product
- Enforce the use of cough/sneeze etiquette (cover coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues, place in rubbish or cough/sneeze into elbow and then wash hands, as above).

Cleaning

- Before and after cleaning, particularly after cleaning high hand-contact surfaces:
 - Remind staff not to touch their face and eyes, if it occurs, wash hands as per the above
 - Ensure staff conducting cleaning of social spaces have suitable PPE
- Implement a minimum 4 hourly cleaning and sanitation protocol (these are additional to normal food production related cleaning procedures), for all contact surfaces, particularly hand-contact surfaces in any social or amenity areas, including doors, door handles, handrails, switches, bathroom fixtures, toilets (for sites with larger staff numbers, implement 2 hourly cleaning).
- Implement supervision and additional checks to confirm procedures are being followed.
- Document all checks as MPI will be auditing your protocols.

Staff Health

- Wellness checks should be done for all staff before they enter the facility / come onboard. Any staff showing any symptoms of COVID-19 (dry cough, sweating or shivering), or complaining of shortness of breath, must be sent home and referred to their GP or Healthline - 0800 358 545 for instructions on what to do and/or if they need a test for COVID-19.
- Instruct all staff to stay at home if they are unwell or show any signs of fever, sore throat, cough, or shortness of breath and to call their GP or Healthline for instructions on what to do and/or if they need a test for COVID-19.
- Instruct all staff to call their Manager / Employer if someone they live with is showing symptoms of COVID-19 including fever, sore throat, cough, or shortness of breath, or have been instructed to be tested because they are showing symptoms of COVID-19.
- The Manager / Employer should direct staff that are unwell and have symptoms of COVID-19, or have someone they live with who is unwell and has symptoms of COVID-19, to call their GP or Healthline (0800 358 545) for instructions on what to do and/or if they need a test for COVID-19.
- Any staff that show symptoms of COVID-19 (dry cough, sweating or shivering, or shortness of breath), or are living with someone who is showing symptoms of COVID-19, should be instructed to go home, or stay at home, and isolate until test results show that they do not have COVID-19.
- Put protocols in place in case a staff member becomes sick and is showing symptoms of COVID-19 or is living with someone who is sick and is showing symptoms of COVID-19. This should involve:
 - Halting operations in the facility / on the vessel for a length of time to do a thorough deep clean of all contact surfaces.

- Notifying staff within the team / shift / crew that they will have to go into isolation until it is confirmed that the staff member, or the person they live with, who is sick and showing symptoms, does not have COVID-19.
- Undertaking a thorough clean of all touch / high contact surfaces (e.g. door handles in communal spaces, bathrooms etc.) before another shift / team begins work.
- If the results of testing for COVID-19 come back negative - all other team / shift members can return to work. However, the staff member who had a negative result:
 - will still need to complete the full 14-day quarantine period if they have returned from overseas or have had close contact with someone with COVID-19.
 - if they are still sick with the same illness at the end of the 14-day isolation period, they will need to stay in isolation until they have been symptom-free for 48 hours.
 - if they are well, and have been for 48 hours, can return to work.
 - if their current symptoms get worse and they feel more unwell, they should phone Healthline for advice: 0800 358 5453.
 - if they feel fully recovered, but then develop a new illness while in self-isolation, they should call Healthline on 0800 358 5453.
- If the results come back positive – the person with COVID-19 will be required to isolate and follow instructions from their Public Health Unit.
 - All other team / shift members (who will still be at home) should be advised and required to stay at home and isolate for 14 days from last contact with the affected person.
 - If other team / shift members develop symptoms of COVID-19, they must ring Healthline (0800 358 545) or their GP and follow their advice.
 - Once staff have been at home for 14 days and show no symptoms or signs of COVID-19, they can return to work.

Practical measures onboard vessels / farms

- Have time and space gaps between crews and clean touch / hotspot areas between crews.
- Ensure only essential service staff come onboard and make service staff clean hands before stepping onboard.
 - Document their arrival and departure
 - Implement a cleaning protocol after their departure
- Maintain 2-metre separation throughout the working day including breaks, in the wheelhouse, in galleys, and in sleeping quarters.
 - If this is not possible you may need to modify operations (e.g. daytrips only) or stop your operations.
 - If a closer distance (but must be greater than 1 m) is essential for safety, then provide staff with appropriate PPE (e.g. face masks and gloves).
 - If the use of facemasks and gloves is not safe, then you should stop your operations.
 - Some operations are implementing longer shifts (e.g. salmon farms 14 / 30-day shifts).
- Cleaning and sanitising routines for hot-spot (high-use / touch / contact) areas on the vessel (e.g. four hourly, daily or between shifts). Wipe or scrub down with soapy water or appropriate disinfectant, and then dry with a cloth.
- If possible, provide a wash station on land where staff can change out of and leave vessel-specific gumboots and overalls, and wash and dry hands before getting into their vehicles.
- If a crew member notifies that they have become sick and has symptoms of COVID-19, or have had contact with someone that is sick and has symptoms of COVID-19, the vessel crew member

should be told to self-isolate and call their GP or Healthline - 0800 358 545 for instructions on what to do and/or if they need a test for COVID-19.

- All crew members should be notified and will have to stay at home in isolation until it is confirmed that the sick crew member, or the person they live with, does not have COVID-19.
- The vessel must go through a deep clean of all contact surfaces before another crew or shift boards the vessel.
- If the results of testing for COVID-19 come back negative – all other crew can return to work.
 - The staff member who had a negative result:
 - will still need to complete the full 14-day quarantine period if they have returned from overseas or have had close contact with someone with COVID-19.
 - if they are still sick with the same illness at the end of the 14-day isolation period, they will need to stay in isolation until they have been symptom-free for 48 hours.
 - if they are well, and have been for 48 hours, can return to work.
 - if their current symptoms get worse and they feel more unwell, they should phone Healthline for advice: 0800 358 5453.
 - if they feel fully recovered, but then develop a new illness while in self-isolation, they should call Healthline on 0800 358 5453.
- If the results of testing for COVID-19 are positive – the person with COVID-19 will be required to isolate and follow Ministry of Health instructions.
 - All other team members (who will still be at home) should be advised and will be required to stay at home and isolate for 14 days from last contact with the affected person.
 - Once staff have been at home for 14 days and show no symptoms or signs of COVID-19, they can return to work.

Travelling to and from work

For Staff

This section details measures that staff can take to reduce risk of spreading COVID-19 while travelling to and from work. As you will have been exposed to either work colleagues and/or the external environment while you've been outside for permitted activities, we recommend these good hygiene practices for when you go home. This will reduce the possibility of carrying the virus into your home and will help keep your whānau and cohabitants as free from risk as possible.

- Wash hands when leaving and before entering the house. Set up a wash station (bucket of water, soap and towel) at the front door, or use the washhouse / laundry room sink and door if you have one.
- Consider changing clothing after leaving the house e.g. put on overalls and boots outside the front door, or the laundry room / washhouse door.
- Travel in separate vehicles to work if possible. If you must share a ride with someone from outside your home bubble, have the other person sit in the back seat, diagonally from the driver to maximise the distance between you. However, if you are living with members of your work team then you can travel together. If using public transport, maintain the 2-metre social distancing rule throughout, and do not touch face, eyes or mouth until you have washed or sanitised your hands.
- Text your Manager to let them know you are on your way to work.

- Go directly to and from work and do not stop anywhere.
- Wash hands before entering the work area.
- Change into appropriate work-specific PPE.
- Leave work-specific PPE at work in the denoted designated area.
- Wash hands after changing out of work-specific PPE and before entering your vehicle.
- Text home to let your family know that you are on your way home, so that they can go into another room while you shower and change.
- Leave overalls and boots outside the front door.
- Wash hands at your wash station, or in your laundry / washhouse sink if you have one, before entering the house.
- Shower and change clothes before coming into contact with your family members.
- Sanitise any door handles, light switches, bathroom fixtures (e.g. shower door, toilet) you may have touched.
- After this you can join your whānau / family.
- Note that unless others in your whānau / family are high risk and can't go outside your home, it will reduce everyone's risk if they (rather than you) carry out the tasks that can support you like going to the service station, supermarket or other high use hotspots. Please remind them, when they do that to:
 - *Maintain social distancing through-out, and*
 - *if they touch surfaces at these hotspots (like handle of petrol pump) they must sanitise their hands before they touch their face, eyes or mouth.*

For Employers

Essential Worker Travel ID

There are likely to be police checks in place for people who are travelling during lockdown to ensure they are only travelling for essential business. You will need to provide your staff with a letter/certificate (on company letterhead) or some form of ID, that they can carry with them while they are travelling to and from work. This should identify:

- Their name
- Their role or position in your company
- The name of the company/employer
- State that the company / employer is an essential business under the primary industries, including food and beverage production and processing category.

Home Bubble / Zone

The following link provides information that will help staff understand what measures will need to be put in place within their home bubble / zone to keep them safe: <https://covid19.govt.nz/help-and-advice/for-everyone/>

Once staff have had a shower and changed clothes, your staff do not need to limit contact with their whānau / family but should follow the protocols for travelling to and from work to limit risk of bringing COVID-19 into the home.

Alert Level 4 Reminder for Staff

- Under Alert Level 4, when not at work you must stay at home and stop all interactions with others outside of your household.
- You may go for a walk or exercise and enjoy nature but keep a 2-metre distance from people. You can take your children outside.
- Remember, whatever you do must be solitary or with those who you are living with and keep your distance from all others.
- No physical interaction with anyone who you are not living with. i.e. do not socialise with whānau and friends who do not live with you.

At Home Measures (particularly if sharing or flatting with non-family)

Limiting contact with others you live with

- Understand the risk that others in your bubble may present; particularly if you share accommodation with others.
 - Do they go to common hot-spot areas regularly (e.g. supermarkets, petrol stations, hospitals or work in services with high public contact risk)? If so, make sure they wash their hands for 20 seconds when they return home and, if possible, shower and change clothes before touching anything in the home. Once clean, they should go back and clean all surfaces touched on the way in (e.g. front door handle, light switches (if touched), shower doors etc.).
 - We understand that it will be difficult for some people to separate themselves from other housemates. You should do your very best to follow this guidance and everyone in your

household should regularly wash their hands, avoid touching their face and clean frequently touched surfaces.

- Housemates with symptoms should call their regular doctor or call Healthline (for free) on 0800 358 5453.
- Implement ways to limit contact with this person within your home bubble – see below.

Sleeping arrangements

- Stay in a well-ventilated room with a window that can be opened. Try to keep the window open as much as possible to enable ventilation and airflow as this will help to keep clean air moving through your room.
- If you're unwell, you should not be sharing a bed with others. Speak with your family / whānau about sleeping arrangements. Avoid sleeping in a common area until you're feeling better.

Shared living rooms

- Minimise the time you spend in shared spaces such as bathrooms, kitchens and sitting rooms as much as possible and keep shared spaces clean and well ventilated.

Clean regularly

- Clean surfaces with disinfectant after you use them. Try to avoid touching them after you have cleaned them. This includes areas like kitchen benches and sink tops.

Shared bathrooms

- If you share a toilet and bathroom with your housemates, it's important that you clean them after you have used them every time (for example, cleaning all surfaces you have contact with).
- If you are the only one in your home bubble going out to work, it is a good idea to be the last to use the shower/bath in the morning or evening to make this easier on those you live with.
- You should use your own roll of toilet paper, hand towels, toothpaste and other supplies.

Shared kitchens

- If you share a kitchen with other housemates, avoid using it while others are present. Take your meals back to your room to eat. It may be easier for someone else in your household to prepare your food and you avoid the kitchen area completely.
- If you have one, use a dishwasher to clean and dry your used crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them using your usual washing up liquid and warm water and dry them thoroughly, remembering to use a separate tea towel.

Items you shouldn't share

- Don't share dishes, drinking glasses, cups or eating utensils with housemates. After using these items, you should wash them thoroughly with dishwashing liquid and water or place them in the dishwasher for cleaning.
- Use your own toothbrush, towels, washcloths and bed linen.
- Do not share food and drinks. One of your housemates can prepare your food, but you should not prepare food for others.
- Wash your clothing and dishes separate to your housemates.

Towels

- Make sure you use separate towels from your housemates, both for drying yourself after bathing or showering and for hand-hygiene purposes. Ask your family / whānau or the people you live with to use their own towels and keep them separate.

Laundry

- You should do your own laundry.
- Dirty laundry that has been in contact with a sick person can be washed with other people's items.
- Do not shake dirty laundry; this minimises the possibility of dispersing the virus.
- It may be easier for one nominated person to fold and put away clean laundry items (such as towels and tea towels) and provide a supply for you.
- If you do not have a washing machine, wait until you've recovered, and the isolation period has ended, before taking your laundry to a laundrette.

Don't have visitors in your home

- All New Zealanders have been asked to stay at home. Don't invite or allow social visitors, such as friends, family / whānau, to enter your home.
- If you want to speak to someone who is not a member of your household, use the phone or other means of contact.
- You should not have visitors to your home, but it is okay for friends, family / whānau, or delivery drivers to drop off food and supplies, as long as they leave items at the door to avoid contact.

Self-Isolation

Self-isolation is different from staying at home.

Those in self-isolation include:

- Anyone who has returned from overseas travel after 1.00am 16 March 2020
- If you arrived before 1am 16 March 2020, seeing out the balance of your 14 days in self-isolation is the sensible, safest and best thing you can do for the community around you.
- Anyone who has been instructed to go into self-isolation by a doctor or GP or the Ministry of Health.
- If anyone in your household develops a fever above 38 degrees and coughing or sneezing symptoms associated with COVID-19 call your GP (doctor). If you don't have a GP call Healthline (for free) on 0800 358 5453.
- You must advise your manager, supervisor, or employer by phone immediately if anyone in your home is in or has been instructed to begin self-isolation.

Physical or Social Distancing and Self-Isolation

You will be responsible for ensuring those you live with are practising the Government requirements regarding self-isolation and physical/social distancing.

- Physical distancing is about keeping a safe distance from others.
- Physical distancing is an important way to unite against COVID-19, for anyone who doesn't need to be in self-isolation.
- Do not to shake hands, kiss hello or hongi until further notice.
- You must severely limit all face to face interaction with anyone in self isolation and avoid use of all shared facilities and cooking and eating equipment and utensils.
- If you are self-isolating, keep yourself out of any situation where you come into face-to-face contact with others closer than 2 metres away.
- For your own mental health, you can and should keep in contact with friends and family via the phone, or online.

The following table contains the specific questions that MPI are seeking answers to register as an essential service and was developed by Cathy Webb at Seafood NZ. Also provided are some examples of responses that will mitigate risk. These are examples only and each entity that seeks registration will need to independently consider how they can reduce risks and respond accordingly. We advise formally documenting these processes and requirements in writing with your staff (see the AQNZ Resource for Employers: <https://www.aquaculture.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Resource-for-employers-in-essential-services.pdf>).

| Risk Mitigation | Example Response |
|--|--|
| How do your production processes protect your workers and the public by reducing the potential spread of COVID-19? | The protocols as outlined in the bullet points on the previous page should address this question |
| How are you ensuring that workers and others at work are observing social distancing to and from work, during work and during rest breaks? | <p>Supervision and instructions are provided on-site to ensure all staff are complying with the social distancing and/or PPE requirements and procedures, at all times while they are at work, including before work, during breaks and after work.</p> <p>For long-trip vessels, vessel-based crew stay on-board during un-loading and restocking of supplies For day/short-trip vessels, staff are instructed to travel to their home base as soon as landing/off-loading duties are complete and observe all social distancing and requirements while at home.</p> |
| What personal hygiene steps have you put in place for workers to reduce the likelihood of virus spread at work? | <p>All staff are required to follow normal health and hygiene requirements for their job role, plus the handwashing, maintaining cough/ sneeze etiquette and illness reporting procedures as outlined above</p> <p>Work is re-organised so that all staff keep a least two metres apart: or where impossible one metre apart and the wearing of full PPE, including overall/coverall, face mask (covering mouth and nose), gloves.</p> |
| What existing, or additional personal protective equipment could you introduce that would reduce the likelihood of virus spread at work? | <p>Existing PPE for processing operations includes overalls/coveralls, hats, beard covers, gloves.</p> <p>Existing PPE for farm/harvest and deck/fishing related activities includes, waterproof coveralls/aprons, gloves.</p> <p>All staff to be provided with face masks and gloves (if not already provided as part of normal PPE).</p> |
| What steps are you taking to limit access to your plants apart from essential workers? | <p>All non-essential staff have been banned from coming on-site. This includes contractors, unless they are required for repair relating to providing essential services, and all other staff are working from home.</p> <p>Access is monitored and only staff essential to the operations are allowed on-site.</p> |

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| <p>How are you isolating staff, or parts of your processing plants, so that virus spread would be contained should it occur?</p> | <p>Identified/isolated/grouped staff in small teams by activity or spatial area (e.g. by deck activity, process line, packing line, stores etc.). Harvest/fishing activity/production levels have been reduced so that the number of staff in each group has been limited to allow for them to work 2 metres apart, or alternatively if space/activity does not allow, 1 metre apart and wearing full PPE (overall/coverall, face mask (covering mouth and nose), gloves). Work activities separated as much as possible. Shifts and breaks are staggered so that only these groups/teams are in one social space at any one time, with a clean down of contact surfaces in the social area in between each group. Social spaces (tables and chairs) used for eating have been rearranged so that staff can sit 2 metres apart while using the space.</p> |
| <p>What arrangements have you put in place for staff to report any illness and remove themselves from work?</p> | <p>All staff have been instructed to stay at home if they are unwell or show any signs of symptoms relating to fever, sore throat, cough or shortness of breath. They must ring the Manager and inform them. Further instructions are provided to the staff member depending on the illness symptoms. If COVID-19 is suspected the staff member will be required to contact Healthline for advice, and to follow their instructions.</p> |
| <p>What arrangement have you put in place for staff to report any suspected exposure to COVID-19?</p> | <p>If any staff suspects they have been exposed to COVID-19 they have been informed to stay at home and report it to the Manager who will provide further instructions. This will include contacting Healthline for advice, and to follow their instructions.</p> |
| <p>What actions would you take should a staff member be suspected of or confirmed as having COVID-19?</p> | <p>Should a staff member be suspected of COVID-19, they will be asked to remain at home and to contact Healthline for advice, and to follow their instructions. A full clean down of all areas, but particularly contact areas and social spaces will be performed. Should a staff member be tested positive for COVID-19, the staff member will be instructed to follow Ministry of Heath requirements and site will be temporarily closed for 4 days to allow a full clean-down of all areas and time to ensure the viability of any remaining virus has been eliminated.</p> |
| <p>How do you ensure that staff at particular risk of COVID-19 identify themselves and are isolated from work?</p> | <p>All staff have been informed of the risks of transmission of the virus, of the symptoms and have been informed that if they suspect they have COVID-19 or have been in contact with a person who has COVID-19 or think they are at risk in any way, then they must stay at home, report it to the Manager and wait for further instructions.</p> |
| <p>How will you ensure that your workers observe 'stay at home' rules at the conclusion of each working day?</p> | <p>All staff are provided with information, outlining their responsibility to observe all social distancing requirements and procedures while at home and away from work. All staff are required to sign a declaration confirming they will observe both the 'at work' rules and the 'stay at home' rules once they finish work. Any staff that does not sign the declaration, will not be allowed on site.</p> |