



Guidance for Seafood Processors

COVID-19 Alert Level 2 and 3

Version 1 – 13 August 2020

For further information please don't hesitate to contact:

Cathy Webb

Seafood Standards Manager

Email: Cathy.webb@seafood.org.nz

Background

This guide has been put together by Seafood New Zealand and Aquaculture New Zealand to provide specific advice to seafood processors when operating under Alert Level 2 and Alert Level 3 of the Government's response to COVID-19.

We emphasise this is guidance only. You are obliged to meet all legal requirements relating to COVID-19.

This guidance is aligned to MPI's guidance on COVID-19 safety requirements for New Zealand Meat, Poultry and Seafood Processing Industries at Alert Levels 2 and 3. It can be found here: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/covid-19-coronavirus-information-and-advice/safe-work-practices-for-businesses-and-workers/>

The latest scientific understanding of the transmission risks for COVID-19 suggests that infectious aerosols can travel at least as far as 8 metres and infect other people, particularly in indoor environments.

Overseas evidence suggests that processing environments can be a heightened risk for the transmission of COVID-19 and have been a source of outbreaks in some countries. This is primarily due to processing environments often having limited air flow, increased noise resulting in close talking and shouting and groups of people working in close proximity. Therefore, it is critical that we take necessary precautions to keep our people and their families safe, and to prevent this from occurring in New Zealand.

Protocols to be implemented by Seafood Processing Operations

Seafood processors must implement protocols to prevent the transmission of the virus and to keep their people safe.

The majority of this guide applies at both alert levels 2 and 3, however where there are differences, these have been highlighted or identified.

COVID-19 Safety Plan

Seafood processors need to have a COVID-19 safety plan that sets out how they'll operate under both alert level 2 and at alert level 3.

Procedures must be developed for the following:

- Contact Tracing
- Safe Operations/Staff Eligibility/Health
- Hygiene
- Physical Distancing
- Other Workplace Specific Requirements (including cleaning and sanitation)

Contact Tracing

Contact tracing procedures for all staff, contractors and visitors is required, in case it is needed by the Ministry of Health.

- For all staff working on site ensure you have a register of contact information that includes their full name and two forms of contact (e.g. phone number, email address, physical address).
- When operating at alert level 3, you also need to record the areas of the site that each staff member works in, date for each day they are at work and the time on-site/left site.
- For any contractors or on-site visitors, set up a register to record their full name, and two forms of contact, e.g. contact phone number, email address (you could consider taking a photo of their business card), the date, time on-site and time left site, and the areas they have or will work in.
- Businesses must also have the COVID Tracer App QR Code printed and available for use at points of entry.
- Staff should also be encouraged to keep their own contact tracing information when outside of the work environment.

Safe Operations/Staff Eligibility/Health

Staff who are over the age of 70 or who have health conditions (e.g. respiratory disease, heart conditions, diabetes or are immunocompromised) can go to work if they cannot work from home. However, as they are higher risk, measures must be put in place to ensure their safety.

Further information can be found here:

<https://covid19.govt.nz/individuals-and-households/health-and-wellbeing/at-risk-people/#alert-level-2-advice-for-at-risk-people>

For staff that are in the high-risk group, consider what measures are needed to ensure their safety. While this will include the safety measures that apply to all staff, you may also need to consider the use of additional PPE, working in areas on their own or with smaller teams/bubbles, etc.

Note:

Under alert level 3, staff that can work from home must do so. Only staff necessary to the operations are allowed on-site.

Operators need to be alert to signs of COVID-19. The symptoms of COVID-19 are one or more of the following:

- a new or worsening cough
- a high temperature (at least 38°C)
- shortness of breath
- sore throat
- sneezing and runny nose
- temporary loss of sense of smell.

Health and wellness checks are to be carried out of all staff before each day they start work. Any staff showing any signs of illness is to be sent home immediately and further instructions provided.

Any staff that has had close-contact with or been exposed to someone who is a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19, must not come to work and must self-isolate in accordance with the Ministry of Health requirements (this will usually be 14 days from the last contact). If after the required self-isolation period they are symptom free, they can return to work.

All staff are instructed to stay at home if they are unwell or show any signs of fever, sore throat, cough, or shortness of breath and if this is the case to report this (by phone) to the employer for further instructions.

All staff are instructed to report (by phone) to the employer if someone they live with is unwell or shows any signs of fever, sore throat, cough, or shortness of breath (further instructions provided).

Any staff showing any signs of illness on entry to or while they are at work, must be sent home immediately and further instructions provided, including recommending they have a COVID-19 test.

All staff must be provided with verbal and written instructions to make sure they fully understand their responsibilities to ensure safe operations, including what they need to do if they are unwell or have any symptoms. **See Appendix One** for an example that can be adapted for your staff and site requirements.

If there is any doubt about someone who feels ill in anyway, they should stay home until they have been symptom free for 48 hours. **See Appendix One and Two** for dealing with staff health and those who are tested for COVID-19.

Hygiene

All staff follow their normal workplace hygiene and protective clothing routines as well as the following additional measures:

- All staff must use 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:
 - After visiting the toilet
 - Before eating
 - After smoking/vaping
 - Before putting on and after removing protective clothing, including face mask and gloves
 - Before handling any product
 - Before and after cleaning, particularly after cleaning high contact surfaces.
- Staff must be reminded not to touch their face and eyes, if it occurs, to wash hands as per the above.
- Staff must be reminded to 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).
- Gloves are recommended if common contact surfaces are used by adjacent workers. Normal glasses are not considered PPE.
- Implement rigorous cleaning and sanitation regimes in high touch/contact surface areas.

Facemasks – at Level 3

The Ministry of Health has updated its advice on the use of facemasks as it has been seen elsewhere that masks can help reduce the spread of COVID-19 where there are cases of community transmission.

<https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/masks/>

The following is to be implemented:

- Staff working in indoor processing environments are to wear facemasks.
- Staff working outside, and who are not able to maintain a 2-metre distance from other staff are to wear facemasks.
- Staff working solely on their own are not required to wear facemasks.
- Facemasks are to be worn in communal areas such as smoko rooms, amenities (any place people gather or mingle), except when eating or drinking where facemasks can be removed for short periods of time.
- Facemasks are to be replaced immediately and disposed of if become worn, damaged, wet or contaminated.
- Staff must be given instruction on the use of facemasks including how to put them on and take them off. Information can be found at the following links:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/hp7353-ppe-donning-and-doffing-guidance-28mar20.pdf> or

<https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/masks/>

- Visors alone cannot be used as substitutes for facemasks.

Facemasks – at Level 2

The following is to be implemented:

- Facemasks are to be worn by staff working in indoor processing environments who are unable to work at least 2 metre apart.

Note:

Staff working in administration offices or reception areas (not as part of offices located within processing environments) should follow the guidance on facemask use, found here:

<https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/masks/>

Physical Distancing – at both Level 2 and 3

Physical distancing requires:

- 2 metres or more between staff where reasonably achievable
- Between 1 metre and 2 metres where unavoidable (e.g. due to plant layout/operations)
- Less than 1 metre, for which additional requirements apply at level 3 (see below)

Other procedures for physical distancing include (where possible):

- staggered breaks and shift changeover times for different teams
- creation of “walkways” for staff when moving through and around their work area
- people not facing each other when passing in narrow passageways; instead passing “side-by-side” or “back-to-back”
- separate entry and exit zones – with the view of maintaining a 2-metre distance where possible.

The key to identifying the distance between staff is the distance between people's faces. If they are standing side by side – it is the distance between their faces when the two staff turn their heads to face each other and not the distance between their shoulders.

Requirements for operating at less than 1 metre at level 3

For staff to be able to work at distances of less than 1 metre, operators must implement additional controls to prevent viral transmission and should strive to minimise the number of people in this situation, and:

Implement the following additional safety requirements:

- Workers must wear a facemask; and one of the following options:
- Workers must also be separated by a physical intact screen so that the face-to-face distance between workers, around* the screen, is a minimum of 1 metre; or
- Workers wear an additional full-face visor (over their face mask); or
- Alternatively, workers may wear a N95 Grade Facemask without the addition of physical screens or visors.

Note: – when using a physical intact screen, the screen should be:

- fixed in place
- large enough that the minimum face-to-face distance between workers above, below or around the screen is 1 metre, taking into account whether the worker is static within a workstation or moves within a range
- made of materials approved for use in the workplace
- durable and able to be regularly cleaned (generally at the end of each shift)

*In reality this means screen must be big/wide enough, so that if you measure from a worker's face and went around or over the screen (not through it) to the other persons face – it must be one metre or more.

Workplace/Site Procedures

Workplace and site-specific procedures need to be tailored to your type of operation but things to consider are:

Workplace Bubbles

- Identify, isolate or group staff in small teams or 'workplace bubbles' by activity or spatial area (e.g. by process line, packing line, stores, cleaning teams etc). These staff should operate as group in terms of starting and finishing work and breaks so they maintain their bubble at work
- Communal and social spaces used for changing, toilets etc and breaks for eating (e.g. tables and chairs) can be rearranged so that staff can be one metre apart while using the space, if this is not practical implement other risk mitigation screens or physical barriers
- For land-based operations, minimise the time before and after shifts that staff can be on-site
- If possible, stagger shift start/finish times and meal breaks to minimise the number of staff able to congregate in any one area

Contractors and Visitors

If you deal with contractors or other visitors to your site, you need to implement procedures to prevent the risk of COVID transmission between people. This will include things like:

- Carrying out risk assessment, checking:
 - are they in the high-risk group (age or have health conditions)?
 - have they had close-contact with or been exposed to someone who is a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19?
 - have they monitored their own personal health and can confirm they do not have a raised temperature or any other flu-like symptoms and have been observing the isolation requirements when not working
- Confirm they agree to follow the requirements including distancing, sneezing and cough etiquette (into elbow), hand washing/sanitising and all other workplace rules, protocols and measures related to preventing the transmission of Covid-19.

Deliveries of Goods to Site

You need to implement procedures for receiving deliveries – ensuring distancing between the delivery staff and receiving staff. All delivery staff must be treated as per external visitors to the premise.

Cleaning

- Implement regular 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. Ensure staff conducting cleaning of social spaces wear facemasks and other relevant PPE.

Supervision and Checks

- Implement supervision and additional checks confirm the procedures are being followed. The frequency of these checks will depend on your operation, but it is important to make sure staff are following the procedures you have put in place, particularly distancing and handwashing/sanitising after touching high-touch contact areas. It is suggested you do this after every break.

Additional requirements for Alert Level 3

All staff must be made aware of what they can and can't do when they are at home – in line with the level 3 restrictions. This includes how they can travel to work and the necessary procedures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

At alert level 3, we must continue to stay in our household bubbles whenever we are not at work, school, buying the groceries or exercising. People should keep 2 metres apart outside home where possible and it is strongly recommended to wear facemasks when in public.

When travelling to work try to travel alone or only with others from your house. However, if you need to travel to work with other members of your workplace, keep at least one metre distance between all people in the vehicle. Face masks must be worn when travelling with others (not from your house). It is also important to regularly clean any high touch or hand-contact surfaces, such as door handles, etc, and practice regular handwashing.

Appendix One: Instructions for Staff (Example)

Workplaces must implement protocols to prevent the transmission of the virus and to keep their people safe. These are designed to protect you, your families and other staff members from being infected with the virus. This document provides guidance for staff while we are operating at alert level 3:

If you have any concerns or questions, please talk to one of the following people:

- Manager, contact phone number _____
- Supervisor, contact phone number _____

The Ministry of Health website provides details about COVID-19.

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

COVID-19 is an illness that can affect your lungs and airways. The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other illnesses and include:

- a sore throat
- sneezing and runny nose
- temporary loss of smell
- a high temperature (at least 38°C)
- a cough
- shortness of breath/difficulty breathing

COVID-19, like the flu, can be spread from person to person. When a person who has COVID-19 coughs, sneezes or talks, they may spread droplets or aerosols containing the virus which can infect other people.

Here are the procedures if you start to feel unwell.

- If you start to feel ill with any of the COVID-19 (or cold/flu like) symptoms at home before you come to work – you must stay home or if you start to feel unwell on the way to work or while at work with any of the COVID-19 (or cold/flu like) symptoms, you need to go home immediately
- You need to ring Healthline or your GP, they will give instructions on what to do and/or if they need a test for COVID-19
- If it is determined you need a test for COVID-19, you need to stay at home in isolation until you receive the results of the test and you need to inform the employer that you are being tested for COVID-19
- If it is determined you don't need a test for COVID-19, you should stay at home until you are symptom free for 48 hours
- If you suspect someone who lives with you may have COVID-19, or if someone who lives with you may have been exposed to COVID-19, you also need to stay at home and contact your employer for further advice

To contact your employer:

You can contact your employer by ringing: _____ on _____

If COVID-19 is suspected, you must ring the dedicated Healthline 0800 358 5453. It is free and available 24 hours per day for every day of the week. They will give you advice on what to do and you must follow that advice. They have access to interpreters if you need one.

For a person to be considered recovered from COVID-19, they must meet the following criteria:

- It must have been at least 10 days since the onset of their symptoms.
- After the 10 days, they need to have been clear of all symptoms for 48 hours.

If a person was hospitalised, it must be at least 10 days since they were discharged from hospital and they must be clear of all symptoms for 48 hours.

Procedures while you are at work

Work is re-organised so that staff maintain physical distancing or have additional safety measures in place.

This includes when you are in any of the social areas, including the café/smoko/break room and changing rooms and amenities – you must spread out so you are at least one metre apart and remain in your workplace bubble.

We have changed the way we operate so that you can continue to work and meet this requirement. You must follow these instructions.

1. All personnel use normal health and hygiene procedures, as well as the following:
 - Wash your hands regularly with hand-soap and running water for at least 20 seconds, then dry them properly with disposable paper towels, do this each time:
 - After visiting the toilet
 - Before eating
 - After smoking/vaping
 - Before putting on your protective clothing, including face mask and gloves and after removing your face mask and gloves
 - Before handling any product
 - Before and after cleaning, particularly after cleaning high touch-contact surfaces.
 - Use hand-sanitiser after washing your hands
 - Change or sanitise your gloves regularly
 - Please try not to touch your face or eyes, if it occurs, wash hands as per the above
 - Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing with a disposable tissue, and place it in the rubbish or cough/sneeze into your elbow and then wash your hands
 - Don't share your PPE
 - Follow the correct alert level facemask requirements
2. Do not stay at work any longer than necessary once your shift ends
3. Follow any other instructions given by the supervisor/manager

Procedures for while you are at home

While New Zealand is at alert level 3, we must continue to stay in our household bubbles whenever we are not at work, school, buying the groceries or exercising. People should keep 2 metres apart outside home where possible and it is strongly recommended to wear facemasks when in public.

When travelling to work try to travel alone or only with others from your house. However, if you need to travel to work with other members of your workplace, keep at least one metre distance between all people in the vehicle. Face masks must be worn when travelling with others (not from

your house). It is also important to regularly clean any high touch or hand-contact surfaces, such as door handles, etc, and practice regular handwashing.

Public transport will still be available. You can use it to travel to work, but you should sit 2 metres away from other people on public transport and wear facemasks.

Staff Declaration:

I _____ have had these procedures fully explained to me and I understand what my responsibilities are and the procedures I must follow both at work and outside of work and while I am at home.

I _____ agree to comply with all of these requirements.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Company Representative: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix Two: Dealing with a COVID-19 Positive Result

The following is guidance should a staff member, particularly in processing premises, be infected with COVID-19. In this situation, the Ministry of Health will take the lead and each situation is acted on a case by case basis.

Cases are handled by the local MOH representative. These will be put in place for any person who tests positive for COVID-19.

Dealing with the affected staff member and close work contacts

- If anyone starts to feel ill with COVID-19 (or cold/flu like) symptoms at home before they come to work – they must stay home, if they start to feel unwell on the way to or while at work, they need to go home immediately
- They need to ring Healthline or their GP, they will give instructions on what to do and/or if they need a test for COVID-19
- If it is determined they need a test for COVID-19, they need to stay at home in isolation until they receive the results of the test
- They also need to inform the employer that they are being tested for COVID-19
- At that point the employer should identify that person's team/ close work contacts and consult with Ministry of Health or a medical professional to determine if it is necessary to also isolate these close contacts
- The employer should give the site, including any high contact areas (e.g. door handles etc in communal spaces) a thorough clean (see below)
- If the results come back negative, see note below regarding the person who returned the negative test
- If the results come back positive – the person with COVID-19 will be required to isolate and follow Ministry of Health instructions, and that person's team/ close work contacts will also be required to isolate according to the Ministry of Health's instructions if not already)
- Advise your local MPI verifier (if appropriate)
- If any of the close work contacts develop symptoms, they need to ring Healthline or their GP and follow their advice
- Once staff have been at home and in isolation for the time required by the Ministry of Health's instructions and show no symptoms or signs of the illness they can return to work.

Notes:

If there is any doubt about someone who feels ill in anyway, they should stay home until they have been symptom free for 48 hours.

The advice to people who have negative results is:

- they still need to complete the full 14-day quarantine period if they have returned from overseas or have had close contact with someone with the virus
- 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, have been symptom free for 48 hours, they can return to normal activity.

Identifying close-work contacts

The Ministry of Health define a 'Close Contact' as any person with the following exposure to a suspect, confirmed or probable case during the case's infectious period, without appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE):

In terms of a workplace the following are examples of what might be considered close contacts:

- anyone living in the same household or household-like setting
- face-to-face contact in any setting within two metres of a case for 15 minutes or more (e.g. people working opposite each other, sitting opposite each other in the smoko room)
- having been in a closed environment (e.g. a processing area, smoko/break room or communal space, amenity areas, travelled in the same vehicle, etc) within 2 metres of a case for 15 minutes or more

The more you can isolate people or groups people in the work environment, the easier it will be to identify close work contacts.

Dealing with the site

As this virus is new, there is limited research to date, but some work has been undertaken, either on this virus or other coronaviruses. The current information indicates:

- the length of time that SARS-COV-2 (the cause of COVID-19) survives on surfaces will vary depending on factors such as the number of contaminated droplets present and environmental temperature and humidity.
- coronaviruses can survive on inanimate surfaces for many hours and possibly days but are readily inactivated by cleaning and sanitation (disinfection).
- Chlorine-based sanitisers have been shown to 'kill' viruses.

It is highly likely that the site, especially a processing premise, will have been cleaned and sanitised several times since the affected staff member had been on-site, assuming they remained at home at the on-set of symptoms.

However, a full and thorough clean and sanitise of all areas that the affected person and their close work-place contacts have been, is to be undertaken. This should occur when no other processing/product staff (except for the cleaning crew) are on-site. The company is to follow the advice of MOH representative dealing with the positive case, with regards to site closure time-frames –this is likely to be between 2 and 4 days.

The cleaning-crew must wear facemasks and should ensure they are wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as disposable gloves and eye protection or a face shield. They need to wash and sanitise their hands before putting on and after taking off, their PPE.

Areas to focus on during the cleaning and sanitation. All the normal contact and non-contact surface in any work area, as well as amenities, smoko rooms and other communal areas including:

- All high touch contact surfaces
- Doors and door handles
- Break/communal areas, benches, tables and chairs (including seats and legs)
- Any appliances such as microwave, fridges, kettles/jugs, vending machines
- All hand-basins, towel dispensers
- Toilet doors, door handles/locks

- Lockers
- Handrails in stairwells
- Hallway and corridor walls
- Outside smoking areas
- Offices (reception areas, desk fronts, keyboards, door handles, etc)
- Any items handled by the affected person and their close-work contacts (e.g., utensils, pens, control panels or equipment)