

News Flash COVID 19 AND THE ABATTOIR INDUSTRY

T: (012) 349-1238/9

F: (012) 349-1240

www.rmaa.co.za

24 March 2020

COVID 19 and the Abattoir Industry

Dear Abattoir owners

Herewith some background information related to the abattoir industry amidst the proposed lockdown. Although some clarification is still outstanding on certain matters, we will update you on a regular basis.

Background

1. South Africa will enter a National lockdown with effect from midnight on Thursday 2020.03.24
2. Essential and critical business continuity services will remain open. This include Agricultural and food supply related operations, including farming, veterinary and phyto-sanitary provider services, pest control services, and chemical and fertilizer providers. **Abattoirs are part of the food supply related operations.**
3. There is no evidence that COVID 19 may be transmitted via food.

Authorization and Audits

4. The department was **requested to clarify** the authorization to abattoir personnel, contractors, including transport of livestock products, hides and skins, packaging material and other for movement.
5. The department is requested to consider increased frequency of reporting by Meat Inspection Service Providers to the PEO's in the absence of audits by the Provincial department. This might include photographic evidence.

Abattoir Operation

6. Abattoirs are requested to follow the normal biosecurity measures at abattoirs related to personnel hygiene. This include:
 - a. Medical examinations **and daily fitness checks of all personnel.**
 - b. Issuing of clean protective clothing and to avoid the contact between private and protective clothing
 - c. Strict adherence to a shower in policy
 - d. The regular washing of hands with soap and water. Give specific attention to personnel not on a working station e.g. movement of carcasses to chillers, out loading and loading of trucks.
7. Additional measures include sanitation points, reducing the number of personnel gathering in specific areas with shift rotation. An example is to provide for breaks in sections of the slaughter line. The provision of additional protective clothing is not indicated with the exception of essential

visits by visitors to the facility. Explore further practices to increase the physical distance between employees.

8. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.). Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens is available on the website.
9. Abattoirs are requested to increase the provision of internal training in hygiene procedures and personal hygiene matters and to keep records.

Positive COVID -19 cases

10. Current government procedures do not require the closure of an office or factory with the diagnosis of COVID 19 in an employee. Further guidelines are provided by the NCID in the case of confirmed cases and persons in close contact. This include a 14-day period of self- quarantine.

Feedback from Ms Thoko Didiza

11. In her message to the Agriculture and Food Sector of South Africa on 24 March 2020 Ms Thoko Didiza, MP Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development commented that several businesses will be affected, but the agriculture and food supply sector is one of essential systems for livelihood and therefore will remain operational.

*“Our food supply system will remain functional during this period. Agricultural production in all its forms will remain uncompromised. This includes all services including provision of **veterinary and advisory services. Live auctions of livestock and sale of other agricultural commodities** will continue but under the strict conditions a prescribed by the President. **Exports and imports of critical agriculture commodities** and the logistical measures will continue during this lock down period to ensure **global and national food security.**”*

Annexures

- i. LWO COVID 19 in the workplace
- ii. LWO COVID 19 Follow up

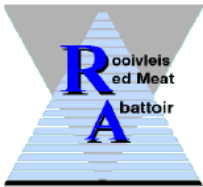
Please provide me with your feedback, additions or corrections to enable abattoir owners to manage these disruptions in the best possible way.

Feel free to call or What's app me on any outstanding matters as they arise.

Regards



Gerhard Neethling
082 551 7232
General Manager
Red Meat Abattoir Association



Vereniging - Association

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CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

With the current confirmation of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) also diagnosed in South Africa, it is important for employers to know what their rights and responsibility are towards employees and other persons entering the business premises. The Occupational Health and Safety Act places an explicit obligation on employers to create and maintain a safe and healthy work environment.

Given that the Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a serious contagious virus and declared an international epidemic, where the World Health Organisation requires an infected person to be quarantined, an employer will be justified given these medical facts to compel an employee to undergo medical testing. However, medical testing can only be done where employees show symptoms of infection.

AN EMPLOYEE IS SUSPECTED TO BE INFECTED WITH THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

The employer has the right to conduct a medical incapacity consultation and request a doctor's report for a formal medical report, as well as whether the employee is eligible for employment. This information must of course be kept confidential, and legislation sets strict guidelines when this process is followed.

A MEDICAL PRACTITIONER HAS CONFIRMED THAT AN EMPLOYEE IS INDEED INFECTED WITH THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Once a medical practitioner confirms that an employee is infected with the Coronavirus (COVID-19), the employee must be placed under quarantine and will this period of absence be considered as sick leave (a medical certificate must be submitted to the employer). If the employee does not have any available sick leave, annual leave and/or unpaid leave will be used. An employee should not be allowed to return to work

until a medical doctor has confirmed that the employee is eligible for employment.

EMPLOYER'S RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS OTHER EMPLOYEES

When there is a confirmed case in the workplace where an employee is infected with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and quarantined, the employer also has a responsibility towards other employees and must the following take place:

- Report the incident to the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD).
- Compel employees to undergo medical testing (justified by medical facts in exceptional circumstances).
- Depending on the above results and feedback from the NICD, the employer may need to close the business for a specific period.

BE PROACTIVE

An infection control program can be set up in the workplace that addresses the following:

- The development of an infection control plan following a risk assessment.
- Implementing environmental controls, such as ensuring adequate ventilation, cough hygiene, use of ultraviolet light disinfection of the air, facilities to wash hands, etc.
- Identifying employees who may be infected with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and requiring the employee to undergo immediate medical testing for possible diagnosis and treatment.
- Ensure the use of masks, gloves, disinfectants, etc. – any use of equipment or aids is for protection and can help limit the spread of infectious disease/viruses.

The National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD)'s contact details are as follows:

- The general public hotline number is 0800 029 999 and operates on Mondays to Fridays, during 08h00 and 16h00.
- Further information can be obtained on the website www.nicd.ac.za.

Please contact the LWO for assistance at **086 110 1828** or if you have any queries in this regard. We are available 24/7.

0861 101 828 | www.lwo.co.za | info@lwo.co.za |



Download - WHO: Getting the workplace ready for COVID-19



News Flash COVID-19 Follow-up

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CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Direct impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) on the workplace

Herewith a summary of decisions announced at the special Nedlac executive committee meeting held on 16 March 2020:

- Health and safety risk assessments need to be conducted in all workplaces. Guidelines and checklists in this regard will be made available on www.labour.gov.za.
- Employers are expected to implement extremely strict hygiene provisions (facilities for handwashing are imperative).
- If an employee needs to self-isolate due to international travel or exposure to an infected individual, such self-isolation period will be compensated by the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) as special leave (unpaid).
- If a business needs to close due to potential exposure, the UIF will send officials to workplaces to assist with registering the UIF claims of employees.
- Assistance will be available to businesses that become distressed due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19). This will be made available by the National Treasury – no details are available yet.
- Employees who contract the virus during their employment will have a claim in terms of the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA).

As forms and other resources become available, it will be distributed to members immediately.

Employers' concerns to continue business operations sustainably during the declared disaster

- **Employers' obligation to create and maintain a safe and healthy working environment**
Employers must conduct a health and safety risk assessment in the workplace and develop and implement an infection control plan according to the risk assessment. Be proactive by applying strict hygiene rules.

- **Loss of income and obligation towards employees**

Take note that each workplace differs and employers' unique circumstances will determine which solution can be considered. **It is critical that employers follow the correct procedure.** Options include:

- Short time: Employers can implement short time when the normal work volume has decreased drastically, but certain activities still need to take place. Employees therefore work fewer hours and are compensated accordingly for hours worked.
- Temporary retrenchments: Employers can temporarily retrench employees due to operational requirements when business operations come to a standstill. Employees are entitled to claim UIF benefits for this period.
- Unpaid leave: The employer and employee can agree on unpaid leave for a specific period.

- **Absence from the workplace**

- Self-quarantine: If an employee needs to self-isolate due to international travel or exposure to an infected individual, such self-isolation period will be compensated by the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) as special leave (unpaid).
- Risk linked to public transport: The employee has the responsibility to report for work and absence will be dealt with on the principle of no work no pay.

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