

DEEP CLEANING IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 EXPOSURE

Purpose

This document has been compiled by the Australian Dairy Regulators Forum with the assistance of Dairy Australia to assist dairy manufacturers in being proactive in their response to cleaning and sanitising procedures for manufacturing sites in consultation with public health authorities following confirmation of COVID-19 cases related to their facilities.

Introduction

A proactive response to a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a dairy manufacturing business will help protect your workforce and limit effects on your business continuity. This information sheet will help dairy manufacturers prepare for specific cleaning and sanitation processes that need to be undertaken in the event of an on-site detection.

Although the virus is spread mainly through person-to-person contact, such as through droplets exhaled when an infected person coughs or sneezes, it can survive for hours or days on contaminated surfaces. Many dairy manufacturers have already initiated additional cleaning and sanitising programs in an effort to minimise potential surface contamination. However, if an employee or other person that has visited your site (e.g. contractors, delivery drivers, visitors etc.) is confirmed as having COVID-19, it is likely that you will be required by your state health authority to undertake a **deep clean**.

Definition and scope of deep cleaning

All licensed dairy manufacturers have routine cleaning and sanitising procedures in place and the standard combination of cleaning and sanitising is effective in removing the COVID-19 virus. Deep cleaning in response to COVID-19 exposure is a requirement to perform a cleaning and sanitising regime that is more thorough and extensive than current procedures with a focus on surfaces that may have been exposed to the virus. A deep clean in response to a COVID-19 positive staff member is intended to prevent infection of other staff, so will focus on all areas in which they have worked. Non-production areas such as offices, amenities and change areas are particularly important in this regard.

Deep cleaning is primarily intended to address the points and locations that an infected person may have made direct and indirect contact with. It is up to the business in consultation with the relevant state health authorities to determine if a total clean down of all equipment or the premises is required, or if the deep clean process can be restricted to specific areas.

To determine the scope of a deep clean, consider:

- All the common areas on your site used by the person concerned must also be thoroughly cleaned and sanitised. For example, canteens, offices, change areas, toilets, plus any equipment, tools or PPE used. All surfaces in the area should be cleaned and sanitised paying special attention to touch points such as light switches, keyboards, door handles, undersides of tables, chairs etc.
- The processing environment and where an affected employee would have access to in the plant. The extent of a deep clean will depend on circumstances, function and layout. This should also include surfaces that may not be part of a normal cleaning procedure such as control panels or areas sensitive to moisture. For example:
 - a UHT process that is fully enclosed will have limited personnel entering the production environment, but instead spend extended periods in a control room.
 - An artisan cheesemaking facility is likely to have production staff performing various functions across the whole site and handling many items of equipment and may require deep cleaning of the entire premises.

- A “dry” processing area such as powder blending will have other considerations. As it is preferable to minimise moisture in these areas, it is necessary to assess how your plant may be affected by a deep clean. For example, could most contact items be removed and washed and sanitised separate from production?
- Air circulation systems could potentially be contaminated. The likelihood of this occurring will vary between sites and where any affected employee has worked.

Being prepared

- Engage with staff to reinforce the importance of limiting where they need to go on the site and develop a means of recording where they have been.
- Document a procedure to be followed in the case of a COVID-19 detection and nominate one or two people who will be responsible for oversight of the process and record-keeping.
- Decide if the cleaning will be done by in-house staff or a cleaning contractor will be engaged.
- Consider how the resourcing of personnel may be affected if staff are required to self-isolate for a period of time following contact directly or in-directly with a confirmed case. Be able to demonstrate how teams have been effectively separated from each other during operations.
- If resources permit, gather a “strike team” together – an internal or external group on standby that is trained in the deep cleaning procedures, familiar with areas likely to need attention
- Ensure there are adequate supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning and disinfection chemicals, disposable paper towel etc on hand.
- The cleaning and sanitising agents used in your usual cleaning regime will be suitable for deep cleaning.

Deep cleaning process

- Document all the actions that you take from the outset (i.e. from when first advised of the case detection) to demonstrate to health authorities that steps taken have been proportionate and appropriate.
- Isolate all the areas that could be contaminated.
- Whether operations need to be suspended will depend on factors such as the size of operations, nature of work performed, number of people, and suspected areas of exposure.
- The deep cleaning process should predominantly involve manual wet wiping. Use of dry dusting, air pressure guns or high-pressure cleaners is inappropriate – they may spread the virus and should be avoided.
- No personnel, except those involved in the cleaning will be permitted in the affected area until the clean is complete. It is expected that a one-off process will be sufficient, however if further positive cases of employees are detected, then an expansion and repeat of the process may be required.
- Safe Work Australia advises that safety glasses, gloves and surgical masks should be used if cleaning an area impacted by a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case.
- Ensure sanitiser remains on surfaces for the appropriate contact time as specified by the manufacturer.
- Double bag and dispose of waste in the usual manner.

Further information

Contact your state regulator

References

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/cleaning-and-disinfecting-reduce-covid-19-transmission-building-and-construction-sites>

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/how-clean-and-disinfect-your-workplace-covid-19>

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/food-processing-and-manufacturing/cleaning>