



Kentucky Department of Agriculture

March 25, 2020

Friends,

Over the past several days, the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) has received a non-stop inquiries from people all across Kentucky who have questions about the COVID-19 virus and what it means for them, their businesses, and their families. Many of the questions we've received from Kentucky farmers and agri-businesses concern the executive orders and guidance documents that Governor Beshear has issued over the past several weeks.¹

With this letter, I will lay out my team's best understanding of what the Governor's orders and guidance mean for our farmers and agri-businesses. Of course, the COVID-19 response is a fast-moving one, and so we must realize that new orders or guidance may come from Governor Beshear, or from the federal government, that would require us to re-evaluate what the rules of the road will be going forward. I plan to update this letter from time to time so that it will keep up with new developments and provide a reliable resource for Kentucky's farm families and agri-businesses.

According to an [order that was issued on March 17](#), the following categories of businesses may remain open but must implement measures to comply with guidance from the federal government's Centers for Disease Control (CDC):²

- Farming and other agriculture activities
- Food processing, agriculture, and manufacturing businesses
- Feed mills
- Grocery stores³
- Banks
- Veterinary clinics⁴

¹ To see a list of the actions taken by Kentucky state government agencies since the outbreak of COVID-19, you can visit [this website](#). If you'd like to receive regular updates by email, [sign up here](#).

² The [CDC's guidance](#) calls for maintaining a distance of 6 feet between persons, ensuring employees practice appropriate hygiene measures, including regular and thorough handwashing; ensuring that employees who are sick remain home; and regularly cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces.

³ Farmers markets, like groceries, may remain open for business. On March 18, KDA released a guidance document titled ["Suggestions for a Successful and Safe Start to Your Farmers Market Season in 2020."](#)

⁴ Veterinary clinics may remain open, but veterinarians [should suspend spays, neuters, and other elective procedures](#).

- Pet stores and pet supply stores
- Grain warehouses and other storage/distribution facilities

The Governor's [March 17 order](#) also stated that “public-facing businesses that encourage public congregation or, that by the nature of the service to the public, cannot comply with CDC guidelines concerning social distancing, shall cease all in-person operations.” Examples listed in the Order included concert venues, theaters, and sporting event facilities. The order seems to suggest that livestock shows and in-person auctions must cease operations as well.

According to an [order that was issued on March 22](#), the following categories of retail businesses may remain open but must implement measures to comply with CDC guidance:

- Grocery stores and supermarkets
- Specialty food stores
- Markets selling meat, fish, and produce, including farmers markets
- Beer, wine, and liquor stores
- Pharmacies
- General merchandise stores (for example, warehouse clubs and supercenters)
- Auto parts, repair, and tire stores
- Automobile dealers' repair/parts/service departments (but showrooms must close)
- Truck, van, and car rental businesses

Early this week, I contacted the Governor's office to request some important clarifications. Later that day, [Governor Beshear made a statement](#) that the following categories of businesses may remain open but must implement measures to comply with CDC guidance:

- Agriculture supply stores
- Agriculture equipment stores and dealerships
- Livestock-related businesses (except [those that encourage public congregation](#), such as in-person auctions)

In the weeks ahead, I will do my best to update this letter to reflect new developments so that it will remain a current, up-to-date resource that you can rely on in the weeks ahead. These are tough times for everyone, but I know that we will overcome this adversity in the same way that Kentuckians always do—together.

Respectfully,



Dr. Ryan F. Quarles
Commissioner