



COVID-19 PREVENTION – BEST PRACTICES FOR FIELD RESEARCH

TO: Department Heads and Station Directors

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SUBJECT: Revised Travel and Research Guidelines during COVID-19

The safety of students, staff, and faculty is the priority for the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station as we strive to fulfill our research and service obligations. To date, practicing good hygiene and social distancing have resulted in no COVID-19 cases among AES employees. We thank everyone for your diligence towards keeping one another safe and healthy both at home and at work. As communicated previously, we encourage you to plan and execute your field research plans for 2020 but to do so in a manner that maximizes the safety of all employees. If we remain diligent, we are confident that we can reduce the impact of the pandemic.

The revised list of best practices when traveling and conducting research during the COVID-19 pandemic is provided below along with links to COVID-19 internet resources. Share this information with the students, staff, and faculty in your department/unit.

1. Monitor the health status of students, staff, and faculty before, during and after the trip. If someone does not "feel good" they should not travel.
2. Anyone that has been quarantined should not travel until the required 14-day quarantine period is complete.
3. Coordinate the trip to experiment stations with the station director. Via email (i.e., in writing), communicate the
 - a. dates/times you will be on station,
 - b. names of who in your group will be on station,
 - c. farm equipment that will be needed, and
 - d. what assistance you will need from the station staff.

4. During the trip, do not transport others (e.g., station staff, farmers, industry reps, etc...) in your vehicle.
5. In-state, overnight travel is permitted. The best practice is to travel one person per vehicle and one person per hotel room, but this may not be practical for all situations. When traveling:
 - a. Limit vehicle occupancy to two people per vehicle and wear a clean mask.
 - b. Limit hotel room occupancy to two people per room.
 - c. When traveling and staying in hotels, maintain the same two people in vehicles and hotel rooms for the duration of the trip.
 - d. Plan gas and food stops. Treat gas pump handles and food containers like any other surface that may potentially be a source of COVID-19.
 - e. Carry individual coolers for water and drinks (not a common cooler for the trip).
 - f. Avoid areas with a high incidence of positive COVID-19 cases. A map showing Arkansas counties and positive COVID-19 cases can be found at <https://adem.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/f533ac8a8b6040e5896b05b47b17a647>.
6. Clean/sterilize vehicles and farm equipment surfaces before and after using the equipment. Assume the last person that used the equipment did not clean it.
7. Wear PPE appropriate for the task and proximity among co-workers. Since PPE is in short supply within many research programs and at several stations, so use it wisely. Safety is the priority. If working in a situation where social distancing may be compromised, wear a facemask.
8. Keep track of who you interact with and what facilities you use during visits to stations. Should you or someone in your group test positive for COVID-19 this information must be reported. If you are in contact with someone that tests positive, you will have to self-quarantine for 14 days.
9. Sterilize surfaces with a solution made with ½ cup of chlorine bleach (5% hypochlorite) per gallon water. Make fresh cleaning solution daily.
10. If you develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19 symptoms, contact your supervisor, the station director, and your healthcare provider immediately.
11. Diligently practice the standard CDC recommendations that include:
 - a. Frequent and thorough handwashing with soap (20+ seconds). If soap is not available, use hand sanitizer,
 - b. Maintain the social distance of 6 ft or more
 - c. Avoid handshakes and minimize hand contact with your face,
 - d. Cover your mouth when sneezing or coughing,
 - e. Frequently disinfect surfaces in common use areas CDC Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> and <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/essential-goods-services.html>
 - f. Compilation of COVID-19 information on distancing, disinfecting, PPE, etc... <https://www.uaex.edu/life-skills-wellness/health/covid19/default.aspx>