COVID-19 and Meat Processing: Background and Technical Assistance

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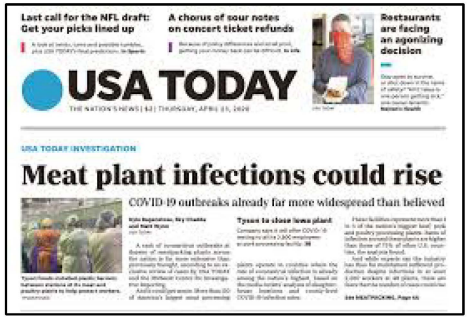
GLOBAL CENTER FOR HEALTH SECURITY

Background

MMWR Report (U.S., as of May 31st):

- At least **16,233** COVID-19 cases among meat processing workers
- At least **86** have died
- **9.1%** of meat/poultry processing workers
- **87%** occurred among workers in minority populations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Meat plant infections could rise

COVID-19 outbreaks already far more widespread than believed

Tyson to close Iowa plant

Meat processing declared "critical infrastructure" on April 28

CDC/OSHA issued guidance on April 26

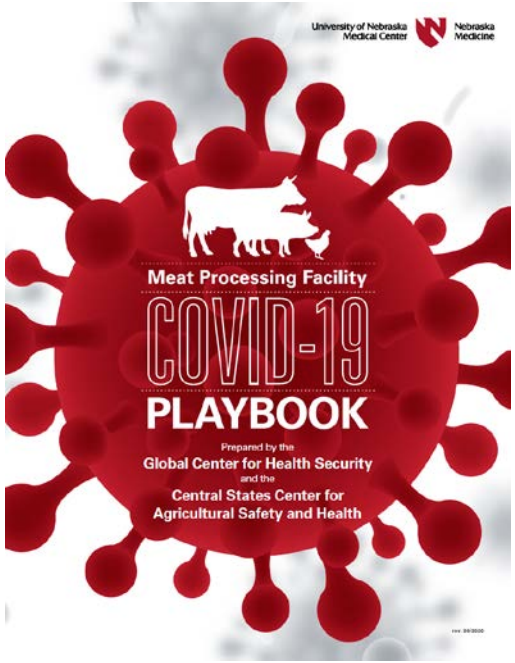
TABLE 1. Laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases among workers in meat and poultry facilities — 23 states, April–May 2020*

State	Type of meat/poultry in affected facilities	No. (%) Facilities affected	Workers in affected facilities†	Confirmed COVID-19 cases among workers	COVID-19–related deaths§
Arizona	Beef	1	1,750	162 (9.3)	0 (0)
Colorado	Beef, bison, lamb, poultry	7	7,711	422 (5.5)	9 (2.1)
Georgia	Poultry	14	16,500	509 (3.1)	1 (0.2)
Idaho	Beef	2	797	72 (9.0)	0 (0)
Illinois	Beef, pork, poultry	26	N/A	1,029 (—)	10 (1.0)
Kansas	Beef, pork, poultry	10	N/A	2,670 (—)	8 (0.3)
Kentucky	Pork, poultry	7	7,633	559 (7.3)	4 (0.7)
Maine	Poultry	1	411	50 (12.2)	1 (2.0)
Maryland	Poultry	2	2,036	208 (10.2)	5 (2.4)
Massachusetts	Poultry, other	33	N/A	263 (—)	0 (0)
Missouri	Beef, pork, poultry	9	8,469	745 (8.8)	2 (0.3)
Nebraska	Beef, pork, poultry	23	26,134	3,438 (13.2)	14 (0.4)
New Mexico	Beef, pork, poultry	2	550	24 (4.4)	0 (0)
Pennsylvania	Beef, pork, poultry, other	30	15,548	1,169 (7.5)	8 (0.7)
Rhode Island	Beef, pork, poultry, other	6	N/A	78 (—)	0 (0)
South Carolina	Beef, pork, poultry, other	16	N/A	97 (—)	0 (0)
South Dakota	Beef, pork, poultry	4	6,500	1,593 (24.5)	3 (0.2)
Tennessee	Pork, poultry, other	7	N/A	640 (—)	2 (0.3)
Utah	Beef, pork, poultry	4	N/A	67 (—)	1 (1.5)
Virginia	Pork, poultry, other	14	N/A	1,109 (—)	10 (0.9)
Washington	Beef, poultry	7	4,452	468 (10.5)	4 (0.9)
Wisconsin	Beef, pork, veal	14	14,125	860 (6.1)	4 (0.5)
Wyoming	Beef	0	N/A	1 (—)	0 (0)
Total¶	**Beef, bison, lamb, pork, poultry, veal, other**	**239**	**112,616**	**16,233**	**86**
Combined total**	—	**264**	—	**17,358**	**91**

(Waltenburg et al., 2020)

Technical Assistance

- Team of Infectious Disease Experts from Global Center for Health Security at University of Nebraska Medical Center
- Provided technical assistance to meat processing facilities in Nebraska
    - Onsite visits (14) and technical assistance calls (9)
- Observations and best practices have been collated to develop Guidelines and Recommendations for mitigating risks of COVID-19 in these facilities

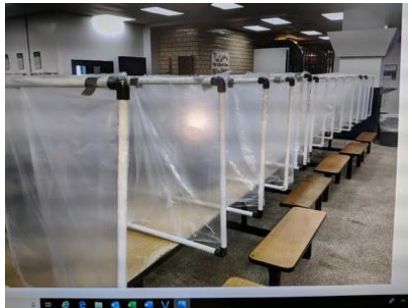


https://www.unmc.edu/healthsecurity/

Recommendations & Observations

- Challenges and Increased exposure risks
  - •Hundreds to thousands of workers per shift
  - •Prolonged close contact on production lines
  - •Compact welfare areas (cafeteria, locker rooms, hallways)

- Key Recommendations from Infection Control standpoint:
  - •Universal mask policy
  - •Physical barriers (e.g., Plexiglass partitions on the line, at cafeteria tables)
  - •Physical distancing (on production line, in welfare areas, additional tent space)
  - •Education
  - •Paid sick leave and no-penalty absenteeism (NOT bonus pay tied to attendance!)



Conclusions

- Worked solely with plant leadership
- Measures have been implemented, but how will they be maintained?
    - Compliance
    - Enforcement
    - Sustained policies

Search

Bloomberg

Markets

Tyson Reinstates Policy That Penalizes Absentee Workers

By Deena Shanker and Jen Skerritt

June 2, 2020, 8:27 PM CDT *Updated on June 3, 2020, 1:03 PM CDT*

References

UNMC Global Center for Health Security (GCHS):

Meat Processing COVID-19 Playbook: https://www.unmc.edu/healthsecurity/covid-19/playbooks/Meat-Processing-Playbook-Final.pdf

GCHS Meat Processing Resources: https://www.unmc.edu/healthsecurity/covid-19/playbooks/meatpacking.html

Waltenburg MA, Victoroff T, Rose CE, et al. Update: COVID-19 Among Workers in Meat and Poultry Processing Facilities — United States, April–May 2020. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2020;69:887-892. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6927e2external icon

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