ISU CALS Guidelines/Protocols for COVID-19 related procedures for research conducted at private farms and other non-ISU lands

April 10, 2020 |

This guidance reflects the best available information as of April 10, 2020. The COVID-19 situation is likely to change with more restrictions in the next few months.

The intent of these procedures is to minimize the risk of disease transmission and protect the health and safety of ISU staff and non-ISU people on participating farms/research sites when conducting research activities at privately owned farms and other non-ISU land. One person developing coronavirus symptoms can result in quarantine of all those who have had contact with that person and could shut down an entire research station or compromise the work force of a private farm.

The best way to reduce risk is to reduce scope and scale of research projects to the absolute minimum, especially minimizing the number of research sites and visits to the sites. Use ISU Research Farms to the maximum extent possible. Perform research on privately owned farms /lands only if absolutely necessary. Do not start a site that may have to be shut down in the near future.

Staff (faculty, P&S/Merit, students) must not be compelled to engage in travel or lab activities that they are not comfortable with. The ISU faculty researcher will inform their staff that they have the right to refuse to engage in activities that could expose them to the public and get positive consent of their willingness to assume the risks involved. Researchers must have a plan of action if someone within the research group or someone on a farm or research station develops symptoms or tests positive.

If you have questions, contact Joe Colletti, Senior Associate Dean (for research).

Required safety for CALS researchers while traveling:

- One person per vehicle
- Travel must be pre-approved by Senior Associate Dean Colletti
- Stop only for fuel – disinfect after fueling

Researcher safety at approved farm visit locations

- Research work must be included in an approved Private Farm/Other Lands Research plan. Find form to submit at: Submit form to Senior Associate Dean Colletti
- Researchers should consider avoiding the risk of a site visit by asking the farm/lands manager in advance if on-site staff can perform specific tasks.
- For private farm /non-ISU land visits, researchers must determine the status of farm /land using the questions below. If the answer to any of these questions are yes, do not visit the farm/research site.
- Research personnel must develop a plan to avoid contact with people, equipment and facilities during site visits.
- Researchers must provide the site manager with the location of their tasks to be performed and Standard Operating Procedure (SOP ) for the visit. The SOP should include pre- and post- visit protocols for disinfecting people, equipment, and facilities.
• Research personnel must arrange for specific day and time of visits and get prior approval of the private farm/land manager so that plans can be made to avoid contact with farm/land staff.

USDA Standard Questions to determine COVID-19 status at a location:

1. Have you, someone living in your household, someone with you have been in close or frequent contact with, or someone you are caring for been diagnosed with COVID-19 (Coronavirus) or had any contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?
2. In the last 14 days, have you or someone living in your household, or someone with you have been in close or frequent contact with, or someone you are caring for returned from, or made a travel connection through a CDC Level 3 or Level 2 country or State Department Level 3 or Level 4 country?
3. Do you currently have, or have you had within the last 24 hours, any cold or flu symptoms with a fever greater than 100.4 F or acute respiratory distress (e.g., shortness of breath and coughing)?