



Ministry of  
Agriculture

## COVID-19 INFORMATION FOR U-PICK OPERATIONS IN BC

The BC Restart Plan takes a phased approach to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. Each phase provides guidance for individuals and businesses. The information in this document is written to provide business operators with suggested modifications that adhere to Phase 1 restrictions, which is the highest level of restriction. As phases progress, business owners may choose to relax certain practices as long as they continue to follow the guidance and orders of the Provincial Health Officer. Phases may change quickly if the number of COVID-19 cases increase in the community, so business owners will need to keep up to date with PHO guidance and be able to respond by adjusting business practices to adhere to requirements under the different phases of BC's Restart Plan.

For more information on BC's restart plan visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/bc-restart-plan>

### Introduction

This document outlines information for U-pick farms to meet Provincial Health Officer (PHO) orders, notices and guidance. The information in this document is meant to complement PHO recommendations and, PHO orders and guidance take precedent. Over the next several months, [PHO Orders, Notices and Guidance](#) will be updated and the level of restrictions may fluctuate which may impact an operator's ability to meet PHO recommendations. Stay informed and responsive by checking updates at the [BC Centre for Disease Control](#) and PHO websites.

U-pick operations are frequently a component of a larger farm operation with the area designated to U-pick varying between 1-5 hectares and engage the public in harvesting the crop (e.g. berries, fruits, vegetables, pumpkins, Christmas trees). U-pick operations may also be subject to the PHO order for Industrial Camps and should also follow the additional guidance and requirements for farm operations that provide accommodation for workers in [Protecting BC Farmers and Farm Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).



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## General operations during the COVID-19 pandemic

If you choose to continue operating your business during the COVID-19 pandemic, you must follow PHO orders and guidance and develop a plan in accordance with the guidance from WorkSafeBC. Implementing PHO orders and guidance will decrease the risk of virus transmission in your workplace and better ensure the health and safety of yourself, your employees and the community at large.

Steps 1 to 3 outline measures that will help your operation adhere to the PHO orders and guidance.

### **Step 1: Conduct workplace risk assessment**

Workplaces that choose to continue to operate during COVID-19 should conduct a workplace risk assessment, which can be found at: [COVID-19 risk-informed decision-making guidelines for workplaces and businesses](#). This will assist business owners to determine what risks exist in their workplace and the level of risk involved in various activities or operations, as well as provide strategies to mitigate certain risks.

### **Step 2: Implement safety precautions in your business or workplace**

All workplaces must implement the measures described in the PHO orders and employers must create a [COVID-19 safety plan](#) that include the basic precautions around: physical distancing, hand washing, covering nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing, and monitoring and reporting illness. All employees must participate in an education session provided by the employer. Employees must receive education and training on safety measures and protocols for employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. Training must include education on physical distancing, hygiene, monitoring and reporting illness, and staying home when ill.

### **PHO Orders and Guidance Documents**

The office of the PHO has posted orders and guidance on their website. Guidance documents that are relevant to your worksite/operation should be reviewed: [PHO Orders, Notices and Guidance](#). Agriculture operations that provide accommodation will be required to implement the PHO Order for Industrial Camps. All agricultural operations with employees are required to implement the PHO Order for Workplace COVID-19 Safety Plans.

### **Step 3: Review industry specific information and guidance**

If implementing PHO orders or guidance appears logistically challenging due to the nature of your operation, industry specific information may be needed. The federal and provincial government and industry associations are in the process of creating industry specific guidance and information. Check relevant industry websites for any information that might apply to your operation.

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If you have completed all the previous steps and still have questions or need further guidance or information please contact the Ministry of Agriculture 1-888-221-7141 or [AgriServiceBC@gov.bc.ca](mailto:AgriServiceBC@gov.bc.ca) for support in determining additional measures that may be needed.

## Information for U-Pick Farms during COVID-19

As a business owner it is your responsibility to ensure that PHO orders and guidance is being followed at your operation. Communicate to the public what is acceptable customer behaviour during COVID-19 and that this may be different then what has been acceptable in previous years (e.g. In previous years U-pick farms may have served as a venue for socializing, this is no longer the case during COVID-19. Customers are expected to stay with their family unit and minimize interactions with other customers and staff).

This section provides information specifically for farmers who operate U-pick farms. For the purpose of this document the term “household unit” refers to either an individual or small group of people that arrived together and live in the same household.

### Communication with Customers

- Communicate with visitors that if they feel ill, they should not come to the farm.
- Post signage to communicate requirements for physical distancing, directional movement through fields, hand washing, picking containers and payment options ([Link to BC CDC resources at a glance - posters](#))
- Communicate your enhanced practices to customers before the season by posting on social media, newsletters, or website.
- Ensure staff is easily recognizable (e.g. wearing a brightly coloured shirt or vest).
- Remind customers to keep a two-meter distance from staff at all times.

### Customer Handwashing

- Provide stations for handwashing and/or hand sanitizing with 60 percent alcohol or higher. Stations should be cleaned regularly.
- Post signs at all hand washing stations with handwashing instructions ([BC CDC handwashing poster](#))
- Require that all customers sanitize or wash hands before entering the field and before paying, before eating, after going to the washroom, and any time hands are visibly soiled.

### Picking Containers

- Provide standardized containers for customers to purchase for use and take home.
- Ask customers to not bring their own containers.
- Avoid permitting the use of tools and items that can not be cleaned and disinfected between customers.

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## Practice Physical Distancing

- Post signs to remind customers to maintain a physical distance of two meters between household units.
- Create and mark separate pathways into and out of the fields.
- Consider directing customers to certain areas/alternate rows to encourage distancing.
- Consider maintaining a directional approach to lead customers through the field and provide a marked route from field to pay station to parking lot.
- Open up larger areas of the field for picking (e.g. multiple fields at once) to allow for people to spread out.
- Set maximum limits on number of customers in the field at any one time.
- Temporarily close gathering areas such as picnic tables, playgrounds, and petting zoos.
- Demark two-meter separation distances in farm stand payment line up area.
- Limit the number of customers in the farm stand at any one time.

## Payment Practices

- Limit number of customers paying at a time, and ensure physical distancing is maintained for customers waiting in line.
- Install a plexiglass barrier between customer and employee at all transaction counters. If physical barriers cannot be erected, ask employees to wear a mask covering their nose and mouth.
- Require employees who handle money to wash their hands frequently and be reminded not to touch their face.
- Gloves are an option to limit hand contact; however, they should be changed frequently.
- Minimize exchange of credit cards or cash by encouraging contactless payment (credit card tap, money transfers or online transfers).
- Frequently clean and disinfect POS devices.

## U-pick Farms with Farm Stands (see COVID-19 Information for Farm Stand Operations in BC)

- Provide hand sanitizer at the front of the farm stand and near the cash box. Use signage to remind people to wash hands with soap and water or use sanitizer before shopping, before and after paying.
- If possible, pre-portion or pre-package items in bags or cartons before they are sold.
- Limit products on display for purchase and /or keep in cooler or under a protective barrier behind counter.
- Ask customers to only touch items that they intend to purchase.
- Post additional signage reminding customers to wash all produce well before consuming.
- Disinfect surfaces (counters, credit card machines, reusable bins, buckets, railings, doorknobs etc.) on a regular basis, several time a day.
- Post signs at check-outs indicating that customer's own bags are not to be placed on check-out counters.
- Clean and disinfect public washrooms on a regular basis, several times a day.
- Use the list of substances to disinfect on BC CDC's Poster: [cleaning and disinfecting for public surfaces](#).