

# PHYSICAL DISTANCING DURING MILKING

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## Why would we consider “physical distancing” during milking?

The Federal Government, together with State Governments and the Australian Dept. of Health, have clearly outlined the role of physical distancing (or “social” distancing) in reducing the risk of COVID-19 spread in our communities. Practically, this means that in all aspects of work and daily life we attempt to maintain more than 1.5 m separation between individuals, regardless of the activity.

Note that there is no evidence that farm animals or milk can act as a carrier for COVID-19.

To check on up-to-date guidelines on physical (social) distancing and hygiene measures refer to:

- Australian Government Department of Health website (<https://www.health.gov.au/>)
- Department of Health and Human Services website for your State or Territory



*Social distancing in action during milking in a typical herringbone shed*

## Practical aspects of physical distancing during milking:

- Rotary sheds are easier to practice physical distancing in because milkers are generally on opposite sides of the bridge.
- If two milkers are positioned at cups on or cups off, leave 3 bails between you at all times.
- For herringbone sheds (swing-over or double-ups), if milking in **zones** is not already part of the routine put this in place.
- **Zone milking** means that, for example, two milkers operate at different ends of the

herringbone and work in a parallel routine so their direction of activity in the shed is always the same. This method maintains physical separation of milkers.

- Be clear on which milker is responsible for going into the yard should herding be required to avoid people cross-over.
- Be clear on which milker is responsible for cow drafting activities to avoid cross-over.

## Other tips to prevent COVID-19 transmission during milking

### Infection control for milkers:

- Milkers must thoroughly wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser before the start of milking and **before** each time they put milking gloves back on (if taken off).
- Gloves must be disposed of when milking tasks are finished (do not reuse gloves).
- Wear milking gloves from the very start of the milking routine through to the end. This includes from starting the dairy and connecting the vat hose to milking plant shut-off, vat hose dis-connection and leaving the dairy.
- At the end of each run, or after approximately 20 cows in a rotary shed, spray your milking gloves with teat disinfection, or 70% alcohol, or another appropriate disinfectant/sanitiser.
- Practice good respiratory hygiene (coughing and sneezing into a tissue or your elbow) and avoid touching your face.

### Managing contact with “high touch” work surfaces:

COVID-19 is a 'sticky' virus that finds its way onto surfaces including plastics and stainless steel. It can be spread by people who don't have any symptoms and may not know they are infected.

- Wipe down/spray with disinfectant any jointly used and/or shared pieces of milking equipment. This refers to all high (repetitive) touch surfaces within the dairy and may include control buttons, hoses, railings, gate operations, test buckets and worker amenities (eating area and personal hygiene facilities etc).
- Ensure milkers have their own set of protective clothing (e.g. milking aprons and sleeves) and are not sharing.
- Either disinfect all clothing and boots before leaving the farm OR consider having a fresh set of clothes for use only on farm.