

# Protocol for Field Staff on Wildlife Duties regarding COVID 19

18/03/2020

The overriding principle in all situations is that the health and safety of our customers, contractors, staff and their families is paramount. This situation is evolving, and this guidance may change. If staff are unsure about how to deal with a particular scenario, they should consult their line manager.

Key points:

- **Government offices are not closing**, and the Department will continue to deliver its wide range of services as normal as far as is possible across the agri-food sector, including regulatory and certification functions underpinning our food safety and authenticity, animal and plant health, animal welfare, farmer payments and supports.
- **Business Continuity** measures are in operation to help the Department deliver essential services to citizens and to the state.
- **Staff are expected to follow the advice of the HSE at all times** and the current advice from the HSE does not recommend the Department suspending its wildlife programme. The Department will be guided by the HSE if further actions are required to be taken.
- As the situation evolves, management decisions will be made as regards the priority to be given to various activities.
- Communicate via phone rather than in person when possible.
- When working together whilst vaccinating badgers maintain social distance.
- **We will continue to update inspection staff** appropriately if matters change.

## Follow best practice and HSE Guidelines on Hygiene

### HSE Guidelines:

For your own protection and the protection of others, staff involved in wildlife duties must follow the HSE guidelines namely:

- Wash your hands frequently – especially having been in contact with surfaces used by others
- Practice good respiratory hygiene, - when coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – discard tissue immediately.
- Maintain social distancing, that is, leave at least a 2 metre distance between yourself and other people
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- HSE have advised that for people working with the general public who are feeling well and do not have respiratory symptoms, facemasks are **not** recommended.

### **Precautions when communicating with others.**

- Make Telephone contact with any people that need to be contacted including landowners
- Avoid direct close contact such as hand shaking.
- When moving between farms - fully and properly disinfect, including hand washing.

### **Farmer informs wildlife staff that they have COVID 19.**

- If an officer is in communication with a farmer or any other member of the public and the person indicates they have COVID19 the staff member should advise the farmer that they stay in contact with their doctor and the staff member should avoid any contact with the farmer.
- If the staff member has had inadvertent contact they should contact their doctor.

### **Farmer express concerns about the risk of spreading COVID 19.**

- When an officer rings a farmer to notify them of wildlife activity and the farmer express concerns about people entering their farm increasing the risk of the spread of COVID 19 :
- The DAFM officer should re-assure the farmer that all DAFM staff follow the appropriate HSE guidelines for good hygiene practice
- Where the farmer insists they don't want the wildlife activity to go ahead the DAFM technical officer, in consultation with management, may defer activity on that farm until a later time.