



COVID-19 PREVENTION – BEST PRACTICES FOR FIELD RESEARCH

TO: Department Heads and Station Directors

FROM: JF Meullenet, Senior Associate Vice President for Agriculture – Research
Nathan McKinney, Assistant Director Arkansas Agric. Experiment Station
Nathan Slaton, Assistant Director Arkansas Agric. Experiment Station
Doug Karcher, Interim Assistant Director Arkansas Agric. Experiment Station

DATE: May 20, 2021

SUBJECT: Stage IV Revised Travel and Research Guidelines during COVID-19

The Division will move to Stage IV on **June 1, 2021**, requiring that the best management practices for research be updated. Practicing frequent and thorough hand washing, social distancing, and other hygienic practices continues to be recommended and should be practiced by everyone. We thank everyone for your diligence towards keeping one another safe and healthy both at home and at work. Employees are welcome to voluntarily practice more restrictive guidelines than those given below. The following outlines the minimum guidelines for field-research practices during Stage IV. The main change from previous guidelines is the incorporation of vaccination status into travel restrictions and mask requirements.

Please continue to communicate research plans to the station director and share this information with the students, staff, and faculty in your department/unit. The below rules for research are based on the most recent CDC guidelines (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>).

1. Faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to be fully vaccinated or seek vaccination based on your primary medical care provider's recommendation. "Fully vaccinated" is defined as 2 weeks beyond the last recommended dose of the vaccine.
2. Vehicle Travel – continue to record who travels together and maintain the same travel partners/arrangements for the duration of each trip.
 - a. Fully vaccinated individuals may travel together in a vehicle using the number of seats with a seat belt as the guide for the number allowed in a vehicle. No masks are required when everyone in the vehicle has been fully vaccinated.
 - b. Unvaccinated individuals should travel together in a vehicle with a maximum of two per vehicle. Masks should be worn inside the vehicle. The best practice for

- unvaccinated individuals is to travel one person per vehicle, but this may not be practical for all situations.
- c. If vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals share a vehicle the guidelines outlined in 2b apply (i.e., maximum of 2/vehicle and masks should be worn).
3. Overnight accommodations – same general guidelines as vehicle travel.
 - a. Fully vaccinated individuals may room together using hotel room capacity limits and do not have to wear masks.
 - b. Unvaccinated individuals may room together with a maximum of two per room. Masks are recommended to be worn except when sleeping. The best practice for unvaccinated individuals is one person per hotel room, but this may not be practical for all situations.
 - c. If vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals need to share a room, the recommendations outlined in 3b apply.
 4. Monitor the health status of students, staff, and faculty before, during, and after the trip. If someone does not "feel good" they should not travel.
 5. Any unvaccinated individuals who are exposed to COVID-19 should self-quarantine and not work or travel until the required 14-day quarantine period is complete. Please consult your supervisor via phone if you think you have been exposed and complete a Covid Reporting Form at https://uada.formstack.com/forms/covid19_reporting_form.
 6. Coordinate the trips to experiment stations with the station director. Via email (i.e., in writing), communicate the
 - a. dates/times you will be on station,
 - b. names of who in your group will be on station,
 - c. farm equipment that will be needed, and
 - d. what assistance you will need from the station staff.
 7. Clean/disinfect vehicles and farm equipment surfaces daily. Assume the last person that used the equipment did not clean it.
 8. Wear PPE appropriate for the task and proximity among co-workers. Safety is the priority. If working in a situation where social distancing may be compromised, the recommendation is to wear a facemask if anyone is unvaccinated.
 9. Keep track of who you interact with and what facilities you use during visits to stations. Should you or someone in your group test positive for COVID-19 this information must be reported. If you are in contact with someone that tests positive, you will have to self-quarantine for 14 days and complete a Covid Reporting Form at https://uada.formstack.com/forms/covid19_reporting_form.
 10. Disinfect surfaces with a solution made with $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of chlorine bleach (5% hypochlorite) per gallon water. Make fresh cleaning solutions daily.
 11. If you develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19 symptoms, contact your supervisor, the station director, and your healthcare provider immediately.

12. Diligently practice the standard CDC recommendations that include:
- a. Frequent and thorough handwashing with soap (20+ seconds). If soap is not available, use hand sanitizer,
 - b. Maintain the social distance of 6 ft or more
 - c. Avoid handshakes and minimize hand contact with your face,
 - d. Cover your mouth when sneezing or coughing,
 - e. Frequently disinfect surfaces in common use areas
 - f. Review COVID-19 information on distancing, disinfecting, PPE, etc...
<https://www.uaex.edu/life-skills-wellness/health/covid19/default.aspx>