



May 2020 Newsletter

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OSHA Issues Revised Enforcement Guidance and Response Plan on COVID-19 Illnesses

On May 20th, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued a revised [enforcement guidance for recording cases of COVID-19](#) in the workplace. The guidance reinforces that COVID-19 cases are recordable illnesses under OSHA record keeping requirements if the case:

- is confirmed as a coronavirus illness;
- is work-related as defined by [29 CFR 1904.5](#); and
- involves one or more of the general recording criteria in [29 CFR 1904.7](#), such as medical treatment beyond first aid or days away from work.

However, given the nature of the disease and community spread, OSHA acknowledges that in many instances, it remains difficult to determine whether a coronavirus illness is work-related, especially when an employee has experienced potential exposure both in and outside of the workplace. OSHA's guidance emphasizes that employers must make reasonable efforts, based on available evidence, to ascertain whether a particular case of coronavirus is work-related.

Because of the difficulty with determining work-relatedness, OSHA is exercising enforcement discretion to assess employers' efforts in making work-related determinations. If, after the reasonable and good faith inquiry described in the revised guidance, the employer cannot determine whether it is more likely than not

that exposure in the workplace played a causal role with respect to a particular case of COVID-19, the employer does not need to record that COVID-19 illness.

OSHA also issued an updated [enforcement response plan for COVID-19](#). The guidance provides updated instructions and guidance to area offices and compliance safety and health officers (CSHOs) for handling COVID-19-related complaints, referrals and severe illness reports. The guidance also covers inspection procedures CSHOs should use.

Source: AFIA

2020 Minnesota Legislative Session Ends; Legislators Will Return Next Month for a Special Session

A politically neutral pandemic played a big part in plenty being left unfinished when the 2020 legislative session concluded May 18th.

As the clock counted down to the midnight deadline to pass legislation, it became more apparent that partisan politics would again prove too much to overcome for many issues, meaning legislators left the State Capitol with lots still on the plate, including bonding, oversight of federal coronavirus relief funds, housing assistance and tax changes. With so much work left incomplete, Governor Walz and legislative leaders announced that a special session has been set for June 12 to address these outstanding issues and any new issues.

The one bright spot this session and of specific importance to the grain industry, was the signing into law of the Omnibus Agriculture Policy bill (H.F. 4285) by Governor Walz over the weekend. The bill, authored by Rep. Jeanne Poppe (DFL - Austin) and Sen. Bill Weber (R - Luverne), included initiatives requested by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, along with provisions from a host of other bills heard by the respective Senate and House Agriculture Committees this session. Among the items included were modifications to state seed and noxious weed laws, laws governing perishable farm product buyers, state loan programs, eggs, meat and poultry inspections, farm safety, grain buyers, emerging farmers, industrial hemp, agricultural education, pet food and several technical changes to the composition of Minnesota Agricultural Education Leadership Council.

The grain buyer changes MGFA sought this session were contained in the final omnibus bill. MGFA's bills asked for a change in both described circumstances from 10 days to 30 days for a grain buyer entering into a voluntary extension of credit contract orally or by phone to give or mail a written confirmation of said contract to the seller. On contracts reduced to writing, a voluntary extension of credit contract must be reduced to writing by the grain buyer, given or mailed to the seller and signed by both buyer and seller within 30 days of the date of the delivery of grain.

With this change successfully made, MGFA would like to thank both Representative Poppe & Senator Weber for their work on our bills.

Per the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, they will be sending out a notification of this change to all license holders in the very near future.

Yesterday, Governor Walz signed the Omnibus Agriculture Finance bill. The bill (H.F. 4490), authored by Sen. Torrey Westrom (R – Elbow Lake) and Rep. Jeanne Poppe (DFL –Austin), includes several appropriations for areas of critical need to the agriculture and food industries. Among the items are \$675,000 to the University of Minnesota to purchase testing equipment for the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, including equipment and supplies needed to respond to incidents of African swine fever. In addition, \$150,000 is included for assistance to farmers and value-added agricultural businesses whose markets and operations were negatively impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. The bill also includes \$100,000 for farm safety grants and outreach programs, an additional \$50,000 for community outreach on farms and rural mental health services, and suicide prevention training.

Job Opportunity – Glacial Plains Co-op – Grain Procurement / Assistant Merchandiser

Glacial Plains Co-op in Murdock, MN has an exciting opportunity in our grain division for a full-time Grain Procurement / Assistant Merchandiser. You will work extensively with producers and commercial end users in procuring grain and setting up marketing programs. You must be able to make decisions, work independently, be detail oriented, and have excellent communication skills, both verbal and written.

You will:

- Purchase ag products (mainly corn and soybeans and/or other soy products).
- Build relationships with both internal and external customers.
- Learn and understand truck, rail and barge freight spreads and their impact on market basis values, with application to the market valuations of commodities.
- Work with producers, updating them on market trends and current grain quotes.
- Work with producers to form marketing plans.
- Work with customers and develop an on-farm grain hauling program.
- Promote risk management strategies and contracts.
- Understand and apply company trade policies and applicable trade rules, i.e. NGFA.
- Work closely with internal grain department personnel (grain merchants, freight desks, hedge desk and accountants) in exchange of information to ensure efficient execution of trades.
- Communicate daily bid changes and closing bids to customers.
- Maintain and promote a strong safety culture and follow all safety policies, procedures and regulations. Identify and communicate workplace hazards and correct or seek assistance in correcting unsafe actions or conditions.

Basic Qualifications: (required)

- High School Diploma or GED
- 2 plus years of Grain Origination experience
- Experience conducting market analysis, negotiating & closing contracts

Preferred Qualifications: (desired)

- Bachelor's degree in Ag Business, Ag Economics, or another business-related program
- Series III license (or willing to obtain)

GPC offers a competitive total compensation package, including: Health, Dental, Vision, Life Insurance, Health and Daycare Flex Accounts, Paid Vacation, 401K, Company Funded Pension, Profit Sharing, Long and Short-Term Disability. This position will have opportunity for growth.

GPC is a Cooperative with Grain, Agronomy, Energy, Feed, and C-Store Divisions. GPC is committed to helping its customers/owners perform their business at an elite level. GPC offers a complete ag business package, but still has that great small-town feel.

To apply, please email resumes to Craig Kavanagh at ckavanagh@glacialplains.com.

Hog Farmer Woes to Affect Minnesota Economy

According to a new study by University of Minnesota Extension researchers, current and ongoing disruptions in the pork supply chain, added to the current 15% unemployment rate, could result in an estimated loss of \$660 million in economic activity in Minnesota.

Extension senior economic impact analyst Brigid Tuck, extension economist Joleen Hadrach and extension educator Megan Roberts found that a 15% drop in hog production would lead to an estimated loss of 2,100 jobs.

The average Minnesota hog farm generates \$1.5 million in economic activity. Interruption of hog processing due to COVID-19 has hurt farmers' ability to sell animals, thus leading to cuts in what they spend on local and regional services such as feed, land rent, trucking and veterinary services. It also has affected payments on operating loans at area banks.

Meanwhile, hog farmers were already losing money.

Widespread closures and partial closures of processing plants meant there was no market for approximately 45% of hogs that normally would have been processed during the last week of April. Resumption of processing and butchering alternatives will help offset some of the losses, but repercussions are expected to continue.

Minnesota has approximately 3,500 hog farms -- ranging from small family operations to large enterprises - that produce more than one-tenth of all pork sold in the U.S. The state's production also ranks second in overall pork exports, at \$763 million. In 2019, Minnesota had \$2.7 billion in annual hog sales. Farmers sold 22.3 million hogs, with the average farm spending \$891,840 to raise the animals.

Losses mount

While hog farmers generate considerable economic activity for the state, they have made little profit, or even lost money, in recent years. On average, Minnesota farmers lost 32 cents per animal in 2019.

Furthermore, the 2020 outlook is challenging, at best, especially for independent farmers who own and raise their own livestock, the economists said. Between March and May, hog prices plunged 26%, from 50 cents/lb. before COVID-19 to 37 cents in early May, making it essential for independent farmers to develop additional options for selling their hogs.

The University of Minnesota Extension encouraged communities to look closely at the pork industry and its impact on local revenue and expenses. Better understanding the industry can help communities plan for getting through the crisis in both the short term and long term, the economists noted.

"Consumers can help stabilize the supply chain by making normal purchases of pork to last a family one to two weeks and be open to buying different cuts," they said.

Source: Feedstuffs

Minnesota AgriGrowth to Hold a Virtual Legislative Wrap-Up Next Week

Minnesota AgriGrowth will be hosting a Legislative Wrap-Up Meeting on **Tuesday, June 2**, from 10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. via Zoom. The virtual meeting will feature four House and Senate caucus leaders discussing key legislation passed during the 2020 regular session and its impact on agriculture and agri-food. This concise and pointed discussion will focus on how COVID-19 turned state priorities from how to spend a \$1.5 billion budget surplus into how to fund a host of emergency relief packages to assist Minnesotans throughout the state. The event will also include a moderated Q & A session as well.

Confirmed participating legislative leaders include:

- Representative Jeanne Poppe, Chair of the House Agriculture and Food Finance and Policy Division
- Representative Rod Hamilton, Ranking Member on the House Agriculture and Food Finance and Policy Division
- Senator Bill Weber, Chair of the Agriculture, Rural Development and Housing Policy Committee
- Senator Nick Frentz, Assistant Senate Minority Leader/Agriculture, Rural Development and Housing Finance Committee Member

There is **no cost** to participate in this event, but advance registration is required to receive the login information. Click [here](#) to register.

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