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Guidance for Delaware U-Pick Farm Operations During COVID-19

Overview

Late spring through the fall is a time when Delaware's U-Pick (or "you-pick") farm operations open to allow residents and visitors to pick their own strawberries, blueberries, peaches, apples, pumpkins, live Christmas trees, etc. These seasonal opportunities allow individuals young and old to create a connection with local farms to learn where food and agricultural products are grown. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Delaware Department of Agriculture wants to ensure that visitors to U-Pick farm operations participate in a safe manner to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The following guidelines will be in place until further notice and are solely intended to allow farmers to sell produce and specialty crops at their U-Pick farm operation to the consumer.

A Message to all U-Pick Participants

If you are sick with any of the following symptoms, stay home: fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, muscle fatigue, chills, shaking with chills, loss of smell or taste. Other symptoms such as headache or digestive symptoms (vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain or lack of appetite) are potential symptoms related to COVID-19 and may prompt further screening, action or investigation.

If you believe you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, or have symptoms of illness, you may not go out in public. Older adults and people of any age with serious underlying medical conditions – including serious heart conditions, chronic lung conditions, including moderate to severe asthma, severe obesity and those who are immunocompromised, including through cancer treatment – may have a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. We want to minimize the risk of spreading COVID-19 within our community, so if you are sick or have been exposed or are at higher risk for severe illness – stay home, do not go to a U-Pick farm operation.

Prohibited Activity for U-Pick Operations

- No social gatherings.
- No entertainment shows or activity at the farm.
- No on-site food preparation or sampling.
- No tablecloths on tables.
- No line of standing customers outside the entrance or exit of the U-Pick area.
- No animal venues.
- No pets, except for service animals.

Sanitation Measures

- All farm staff and customers must wear face coverings. Face coverings are required for everyone 13 years and older and are recommended for children ages 2-12.
- Farm staff must routinely clean and disinfect tables, common areas, and other contact points (credit card machines, door handles and knobs, scales, etc.) with products recommended by the Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

- U-Pick farm operations must make alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) with greater than 60 percent ethanol or 70 percent isopropanol available to all staff and customers, and/or the farm must provide a hand-washing station as recommended by DPH and CDC. There must be designated areas for hand sanitization stations, including the entrance or check-in for the U-Pick location, prior to exiting the U-Pick location, and at the site where payments are transacted.
- Farm staff must provide single use picking containers for customers to reduce possibility of bringing contaminated containers from home. These containers should be sent home with the customer and not re-used on the farm.

Setting up U-Pick

- Schedule U-Pick appointment times for customers using a reservation system to limit the number of people in the field to ensure social distancing is followed. (e.g., You have a strawberry U-Pick field with 10 rows that are 150 ft each. If the rows are 4 feet apart, people must pick in every other row to ensure adequate social distancing thus you can only have people picking in 5 of the rows. If each person is given 10 feet of picking space, your field capacity is 75 people.)
- Consider having customers park closer to the picking site so they can walk to and from the field, eliminating the need for farm transportation.
- If farm transportation is needed, spots on wagons, trucks, etc. should be marked so that people are sitting no closer than 6 feet from each other.
- The perimeter of the harvesting location must be clearly marked using signage, cautions cones, barriers, caution tape, etc. Place signs throughout the field reminding customers of the 6 feet social distancing rules.
- The U-Pick manager (or a designee) must be at the single U-Pick entrance as a “gate keeper” – allowing only the number of people in to pick based on the size and capacity of the field.
- The farm must post clear signage with “U-Pick Rules for Customers” at the entrance to the U-Pick location.
- The exit location will be separate from the entrance location to allow for adequate social distancing.
- Rows will be directional, with harvesting done in one continuous direction, with no opportunity to double back.
- Harvest areas should be clearly marked so each person knows where they can begin harvesting and where they need to stop harvesting, so as not to break the social distancing protocols. Customers should be staggered for picking. (e.g., in a strawberry field, if the rows are 4 feet apart, people must pick in every other row to ensure adequate social distancing).

For U-Pick Customers

- Customers should call ahead before coming to the farm to reserve a U-Pick spot.
- All customers 13 years and older are required to wear face coverings and face coverings are recommended for children ages 2-12. Customers 13 years and older that are not wearing a face covering will be denied entry.
- Upon arrival, customers will check in with U-Pick staff; if the U-Pick is at capacity the customer wait in their vehicle or return when a farm staff calls them when a spot opens to harvest.
- All customers must maintain a minimum of six feet between farm staff and customers from different households.
- Prior to entering the field to harvest and upon exiting, customers must wash their hands on-site using soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) with greater than 60 percent ethanol or 70 percent isopropanol.
- Farm staff will direct customers to progress through the field in only one direction. There is one entrance and one exit. There is no doubling back.
- Please use electronic payment or credit cards if possible. Follow instructions on how to use credit card for payment with the specific farm.
- Upon returning home, wipe down containers and wash items you have picked.

Compliance

The Delaware Department of Agriculture will work closely with all farms to inform, educate, and enforce these guidelines. Customers need to be informed that coming to a U-Pick farm operation may not be the same experience as before, but that the farm is dedicated to mitigating the effects of COVID-19 by staying in compliance and ensuring a safe place to purchase food and agricultural products. If your farm is not able to abide by these guidelines, please cancel any U-Pick operations until such time these guidelines can be enacted. Any U-Pick operation found to be non-compliant with the Governor's orders on social distancing can be closed.