# Guidance for employers of seasonal agricultural workers

# COVID-19 test results process

**Please read and familiarise yourself with this guidance if you employ, or plan to employ, any overseas seasonal agricultural workers for edible horticulture in Scotland.**

This guidance is for the employers of seasonal agricultural workers, although the seasonal workers may also find it useful. This guidance was published on 17 May 2021, and will be reviewed on a regular basis.

## Overview

Employers and workers who take part in testing are playing their part in vital efforts to defeat COVID-19, to keep communities and Scotland safe. Not everyone who has coronavirus will have symptoms, so it is important that you understand and act on your workplace obligations, ensuring your workers understand why the tests are important and take part.

At present, all seasonal agricultural for edible horticulture workers coming to Scotland from an amber list country, or having departed from or travelled through an amber list country within the preceding 10 days, must isolate for 10 days at the accommodation on the farm where they will be working.

As well as self-isolating, the Scottish Government is introducing a new COVID-19 testing process for seasonal agricultural workers for edible horticulture which will legally require them to take two PCR tests during this self-isolation period. If they do not do this, they may receive a fine.

This guidance sets out the recommended steps to follow when the workers receive their results. If you have any queries, help is available through a number of routes:

- The NHS Inform website or the National COVID-19 Helpline on 0800 111 4000 or Textphone on 0800 111 4114. You can also read more in the Scottish Government COVID-19 self-isolation factsheet.

- The Scottish Government COVID-19 Seasonal Agricultural Workers Testing Team. Please email sawsupport@gov.scot.

- The RSABI Seasonal workers' helpline on 0300 111 4160. This is a helpline specifically for agricultural workers and has people who can provide language support. It is open Monday to Friday: 17.00 – 20.00 Sat/Sun: 10:30 to 14.00.

There is separate guidance on the initial testing and self-isolation process.

## How will workers receive their results?

The tests usually take around two days to be processed by the lab, and the results will then be communicated to each individual worker. The method of communication will depend on how the test was registered:

- If the test was registered online using a mobile number, the result will be sent directly to that number. If multiple workers use the same mobile phone number to register their test, anyone who uses that mobile will be able to see the personal information and results of the others who use that number.

- If the test was registered over the phone, the worker will need to call the NHS Scotland COVID-19 helpline on 119 to request their results. This is a Freephone number and lines are open every day, 7am to 11pm.

If for some reason the test was not able to be processed by the lab (for example, if it was damaged in transit), the worker will be given a void result and should take another test. When you originally collected the test kits from the distribution hub, you should have been provided with a number of extra tests for this purpose. However, if you do not have enough test kits, please contact the Scottish Government support team at sawsupport@gov.scot.

If the worker has not received their result 48 hours after taking their test, they should call 119 to query why they have not received the result. They may be asked to take a new test if, for example, the previous test was lost on the way to the lab.

As with the test registration, if the worker needs language interpretation you may call the NHS helpline on their behalf to request a call back appointment from an interpreter with the results. The worker can also contact the RSABI helpline on 0300 111 4160 and they will be able to offer support.

## What happens if a worker receives a negative result?

The worker does not have to tell you about their test result, but in practice it would be useful for them to do so. The action they need to take depends on whether the result was from a test taken on day two or day eight of the self-isolation period:

- DAY TWO. If the test was taken on day two of the worker's self-isolation, even if the result is negative they should continue to self-isolate and they should take another test on day eight.

- DAY EIGHT. If the test was taken on day eight of the worker's self-isolation, if the result is negative they should continue to self-isolate until the end of the 10 day period. On day 11, if the worker has had two negative test results and is showing no COVID-19 symptoms, they may leave their 'work bubble', and their period of self-isolation ends. They may then return to normal work and activities with other people on the farm, however they should continue to follow the current government guidance for stopping the spread of the virus in your workplace.

It is important to note that, even if a worker returns two negative test results during this period, they may present with COVID-19 symptoms (a high temperature, a new continuous cough, and/or a change in sense of smell or taste) at a later date, as the incubation period of COVID-19 is 14 days and there have been reports of symptomatic infection beyond the 10 days. If this occurs, please follow the existing guidance on the SASA webpage.

Further information on the symptoms of COVID-19 can be found on the NHS Inform website.

To protect yourself and others, remember: **FACTS**

**F**ace Coverings

**A**void Crowded Places

**C**lean Hands and Hard Surfaces Regularly

**T**wo Metres - Stay two metres away from others

**S**elf-Isolate and arrange to take a test if you have COVID-19 symptoms

### What happens if a worker receives a positive result?

The worker will be contacted by the NHS Test and Protect team. If they registered their test with a mobile number, they will receive an automated text telling them that they have tested positive, that they should self-isolate with their household, and that they will be contacted by the contact tracing team via 0800 030 8012.

The contact tracing team will attempt to trace everyone the worker has been in close contact with during the infectious period, to prevent a potential outbreak; they will also advise that those close contacts be tested. This is called Contact Tracing – further information is available on the NHS Inform website. When a worker is contact traced, they can consent to allowing their Local Authority to contact them to offer support with things like food or essential medicine delivery through the Local Self-Isolation Assistance Service.

The worker does not have to tell you about the result of their test, but, once they have been informed of the result by the NHS Test and Protect team and contacted by the Contact Tracing team, depending on the information gained, the Contact Tracing or Health Protection Team may also make contact with you. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your local Health Protection Team.

If your farm already has one or more confirmed COVID-19 cases you should let the local Health Protection team know. They can then provide further advice and support to ensure the necessary isolation procedures are followed to prevent an outbreak. Contact details for your local Health Protection Team can be found here: HPS Website - Health Protection Team contacts (scot.nhs.uk).

## What action should the worker take?

The worker, and anyone they live with and/or have been in close contact with (for example, their 'work bubble') should **immediately self-isolate for 10 days from the date of the test**. This is very important, because if an outbreak develops the entire farm may need to be shut down.

Unlike during their initial self-isolation period when they first arrived in the UK, they should not work during this period of self-isolation.

After the 10 day self-isolation period has finished, if they display no symptoms of COVID-19, they can return to their normal work and activities. You should continue to follow the current government guidance for stopping the spread of the virus in your workplace.

There could be a scenario where there is a mix of test results within a single work bubble – for example, some combination of workers who tested positive on day two, workers that tested positive on day eight, and workers who tested negative on day two and day eight. In these scenarios, please contact your local Health Protection Team for advice.

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## What are my responsibilities if a worker receives a positive result?

You should support the workers during their period of self-isolation.

You should provide them with food, accommodation and essential supplies, as the workers should not leave the farm and risk spreading the virus.

In circumstances where you have extra accommodation available, you may want to enable the worker (or workers) that tested positive to self-isolate in a separate place from where the other workers in their 'work bubble' are self-isolating (for example, in a separate caravan). If you do this, it is also important to consider the mental health of the worker, who may not wish to be on their own for 10 days; if this is the case, it would be possible for someone to self-isolate with that worker, as long as they were from the original 'work bubble' of that worker.

**What support is available for workers who are asked to self-isolate due to a positive test result?**

The Self-Isolation Support Grant provides £500 to people self-isolating who earn less than the real living wage. In order to be eligible for this grant, they must:

- Work in Scotland
- Be told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Protect, and
- Have a loss of earnings

The worker can apply for the grant through this website https://www.mygov.scot/self-isolation-grant/what-the-grant-is/. To apply, they will need to be registered with HMRC, and they will need to provide:

- A bank statement
- Proof of low-income
- Proof of employment

They can apply at any point during the 28 days from the date they started to self-isolate. If a worker is given access to this grant, you should have separate discussion with them about how to recover the costs of their self-isolation.

As this grant is applied for through your local council, they can provide help and support during the application.

There may also be crisis grants available to people with no recourse to public funds, but these are distributed on an individual basis by each local authority.

Help and advice is also available from the RSABI seasonal workers helpline on 0300 111 4160. This is a helpline specifically for agricultural workers and has language translators. It is open Monday to Friday: 17:00 – 20:00 Sat/Sun: 10:30 to 14:00.

As an employer you should have some checks in place to ensure multiple individuals are not sharing the same bank account, or OnePay account, as this can sometimes be an indicator of exploitation if the account is controlled by a third party to the detriment of those apparently being paid.

If you are concerned that this is the case, the best course of action would be to encourage the worker to contact Onepay on 0113 320 1900, or via their website Onepay Help Centre, or to contact Action Fraud (who give support to victims of fraud/financial coercion) through their website Action Fraud.

There is also practical support such as food or essential medicine deliveries available through the local self-isolation assistance service, and the national Coronavirus helpline – available at 0800 111 4000, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm – can help those who are isolating access the support they need.

## Is it possible for a worker to leave self-isolation before the end of the 10 day period?

The purpose of the testing and self-isolating is to protect the health of your workers while they live and work on farms, as well as protecting wider communities and Scotland as a whole from future outbreaks. It is very important that everyone follows the rules around testing and self-isolating wherever possible.

There are some limited circumstances where a worker may be allowed to leave self-isolation before the end of the 10 day period. These include:

- A worker returning directly to their home country (although they may need to provide proof of a negative test depending on the entry requirements of the country they are travelling to), or

- To attend medical treatment, including for mental health.

If a worker leaves the UK and then wishes to return later in the season, they will have to go through the whole 10 day self-isolation and PCR testing process again when they re-enter the UK.