Guidance for employers of seasonal agricultural workers

COVID-19 testing and self-isolation 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 their self-isolation period. If they do not do this, they may receive a fine.

The negative pre-departure test that the workers will have received before arriving in the UK does not mean that they are free from infection. Therefore they should follow protocols around self-isolation to reduce the spread of the virus. They must also use the new testing process described in this guidance to take two PCR tests during their self-isolation period.

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 of 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.

This guidance sets out the recommended steps to follow in order to support workers to self-isolate and take their tests. 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 test results process, and what to do next.

Before the workers arrive in Scotland

Tell the Scottish Government about the workers you are expecting

You should inform the Scottish Government via the online form on the SASA website about the:

- Total number of workers you expect per location for the full 2021 season (even if this is just an estimate at this stage).
- Postcode of the workers' accommodation for that farm.
- The numbers of workers arriving each week, their expected date of arrival, port of entry, country of origin and accommodation postcode. If you do not have this information for the whole season, you should complete this form again when you know the details of the workers arriving at a later date. Further information on this can be found on the form itself, and on the separate form guidance.
- Which distribution hub you would like to collect your test kits from (there is a list of the available hubs, and a map of their locations, on the form).
- Whether you would prefer to return completed test kits to that distribution hub, or, if you anticipate having no more than 4 completed test kits per day and distance will make it difficult for you to return these to one of the hubs, to use a local priority postbox. You can use the Royal Mail website to find your nearest priority postbox.

You should complete this form at least seven days in advance of the expected workers arriving on farm. This will ensure the correct number of PCR test kits are sent to your chosen distribution hub. Please:

- Allow one week after submitting the form before trying to collect the test kits from your chosen distribution hub.
- Collect your test kits before the workers start to arrive on your farm.

You should receive two test kits for each worker you identified, plus some extras in case there are any errors when workers take the test, and to cover any workers coming forward with COVID-19 symptoms after the 10 day self-isolation period has ended. The test kits have a shelf life of approximately four to six months.

The workers are required to fill in a passenger locator form before they leave their home country; if the information changes during their first 10 days in Scotland, for example if they move to a different farm, they will be required to provide an updated passenger locator form. They may need you to assist them in filling out a new form to reflect this.

Make a plan

You should establish methods of working that are COVID-19 secure, by assessing the risks and establishing suitable control measures. General guidance about making your workplace COVID-19 secure can be found on the Health and Safety Executive website, and specific advice around COVID-19 for the horticulture sector can be found on the AHDB website.

It is particularly important that, before your workers arrive on farm, you assess the risks and make a plan for how you will support your workers if one (or more) of them receives a positive test result and needs to self-isolate (for example, providing suitable accommodation for them and providing them with food and essential supplies), as this could help prevent a wider outbreak of COVID-19 on your farm. The NHS Inform website has guidance on this. If you have any concerns or queries about this, you are encouraged to contact your local Health Protection team (contact details are available here: HPS Website - Health Protection Team contacts (scot.nhs.uk)); for accommodation-related queries, you can also contact your Local Authority Environmental Health team for advice.

When the workers arrive in Scotland

Upon arrival in Scotland the workers must travel directly and immediately to their place of work, and you should inform them who they will be sharing accommodation with so that they can form a 'work bubble', which they should remain in for the duration of the 10 day self-isolation period. The 10 day self-isolation period will start from the day after they last departed from or transited through a non-exempt country.

While travelling they should not be in close contact with anyone outside this bubble. Their journey from their point of entry into the UK to the farm should be by private coach – they should only use public transport in exceptional circumstances. Do not fill the coach; the workers should be spread out to maintain physical distancing requirements where possible, and they should remain in their 'work bubbles' and wear face coverings at all times. Use multiple vehicles to achieve this if necessary. Further guidance on this is available here: Social distance guidance - horticulture fruit and vegetable sectors - Mar 2021.pdf (sasa.gov.uk)

When the workers arrive at the farm

Self-isolation

The workers must remain in self-isolation in their accommodation with their 'work bubble' for 10 days (11 nights), starting from the day after they last departed from or transited through a non-exempt country. You should provide them with food, accommodation and essential supplies during the self-isolation period; you should organise deliveries or shopping in a way that means workers do not leave the farm or break their self-isolation guidelines. More generally, the workers should not leave the farm, as this could risk spreading the virus. The Scottish Government has published general advice on how to self-isolate effectively, and also advice specific to the horticulture sector.

You should also plan how you will provide these supplies if one of your workers tests positive and they and other people in their household group or 'work bubble' need to isolate. This planning should take into account how you would manage this activity in the event of an outbreak.

The workers are able to work during this period of self-isolation, but only with workers that are in their 'work bubble'.

Testing process

On day two and day eight of the 10 day self-isolation period the workers must take a PCR test. You should inform the workers of the testing procedure, and advise them when and where they should take the tests.

You should set up a dedicated area for the testing. This could be somewhere like a polytunnel or packing house, as long as it meets the requirements set out below. You should also include the day two test as part of the workers' induction process. Supervisors and staff should be available to help explain what the workers need to do to take the tests.

Those supervising must wear a fluid resistant surgical mask (FRSM) at all times. The mask should be changed if it becomes wet, damaged or uncomfortable. It can be worn for around 4 hours continuously, however if it is removed for any reason (e.g. to take a drink) it must be replaced with a new mask. The masks should never be pulled down under the chin.

Supervising staff should maintain 2 metres physical distance from each other and the workers.

To set up the area for testing

You should organise a system of distributing the test kits to the workers and collecting them from workers, including who will administer the system, the support required for workers to register their test (this may be by providing a computer to access the registration website) and who will supervise the deliveries/collections. The testing process should be organised and grouped around workers' bubbles so

that individuals are kept in their isolation groups. The process should follow the FACTS guidance.

We recommend that:

- The tests kits are stored at temperatures between 5 and 22 degrees Celsius at all times, including while in storage before use, while the kits are being taken, and while in storage after the test has been taken and awaiting courier pick-up.

- There are separate distribution points and collection points so that unused test kits do not get mixed up with completed test kits.

- The distribution point, test administration area, area for registering the kits and collection points are supervised. This is to ensure that kits are distributed to each worker, that each worker completes their test and registers it, and that the correct number of kits are collected and returned via the distribution hub or priority postbox.

- You must wash or sanitise your hands before you distribute the tests to workers. Alcohol Based Hand Rubs (ABHRs) must be available for staff as near to point of care as possible. Where this is not practical, personal ABHR dispensers should be used. Wash hands with non-antimicrobial liquid soap and water if hands are visibly soiled or dirty. You should also clean the test kits with disinfection spray/wipes upon removing them from the box you have been provided with.

- Individuals should also hand sanitise before and after taking the actual test.

- The areas for testing and registering the kits should also be cleaned with disinfection spray/wipes both before and after an individual has taken the test and registered their kit using a mobile or computer. Personal protective equipment will be required for those supervising to carry out cleaning tasks, e.g. disposable gloves and apron for cleaning the area, which should be changed between individual tests.

- You clearly display the address and postcode of the workers' accommodation, as the workers will need to use it as part of the test registration process

The place where the workers take their test must be:

- accessible
- clean and clutter free
- secure
- well ventilated
- with physical distancing measures in place properly maintained

The place where the workers take their test should have:

- a table or desk with a flat surface
- a full copy of the instructions for taking the test clearly visible
- hand washing or hand sanitisation facilities
- tissues
- a mirror
- a box for collecting completed tests – we recommend that this is clearly marked “completed tests”.
- disinfectant cleaning solution and cleaning materials
- waste disposal (waste generated as part of the testing procedure should be placed in a residual waste (black bag) bin before being disposed of through standard waste disposal channels)

Taking the test

Individuals must wear appropriate face covering when they come to and leave the area to take their test, unless they are exempt or have a reasonable excuse in accordance with current Scottish Government guidance on face coverings.

There are instructions provided with the test kits on how to take the test (please note you will not be following these instructions when it comes to returning the tests, you will need to follow the process outlined in the “Returning Completed Tests” section below). The UK government website also has a video and further guidance on taking the test.

The Scottish Government is also producing a video and additional visual materials on how to take the test, which will include translations into various languages. These can be accessed through the NHS Inform YouTube channel. If you have difficulty streaming the video, for example if you have a poor internet connection, please contact the Scottish Government COVID-19 Seasonal Agricultural Workers Testing Team at sawsupport@gov.scot.

If the test gets damaged or contaminated while the worker is taking it (for example, if they drop the swab, forget to wash their hands, miss a step, etc.), or while you are returning it to a distribution hub or priority post box, put it in the bin, and provide the worker with a fresh test.

If the worker is harmed or has a reaction while using the test, please contact NHS National Services Scotland by email nss.iric@nhs.net to request a webform account, or by phone on 0131 275 7575.

Reporting any problems with the test kits

If you experience any issues with the test kits, such as:

- Something in the test kit, for example the swab, breaking during the test.
- Part of the test kit is missing.
- The tube in the test kit leaking.
- A problem with the packaging.
- Inadequate instructions.

Please report this by email to the Scottish Government COVID-19 Seasonal Agricultural Workers Testing Team at sawsupport@gov.scot and we will support you to resolve the issue. In order to help us do this, please include the following information in your email:

- Date and time of the issue or incident.
- Your name, the name of the farm, your CPH number, and your contact phone number.
- Details of the issue or incident.
- The brand and barcode of the test kit.

Registering the test

In order to make sure each worker receives their results, each test must be registered with the NHS, either:

- Online, by using the online test registration form , or
- By phone, by calling the COVID-19 Testing Helpline on 119.

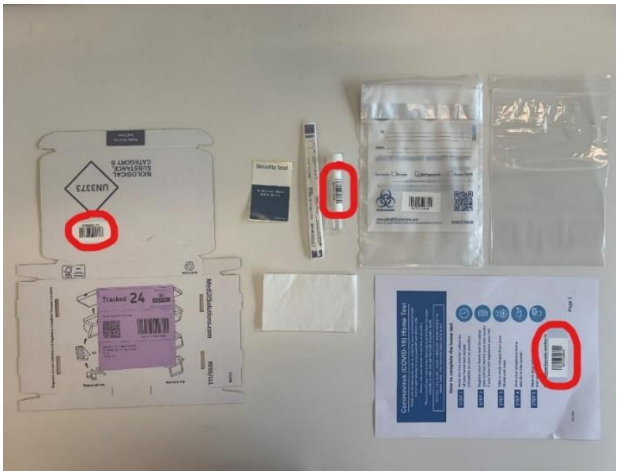
This can be done either before or after the worker takes the test, but it must be done before the test is returned.

If the worker doesn't have access to a computer or a phone, you should either provide them with access, or register the test on their behalf.

If the worker needs language interpretation during the registration process, you may call the NHS helpline on their behalf to request an interpreter, or the worker can contact the RSABI helpline on 0300 111 4160 and they will be able to offer support.

To make sure the registration process runs safely and smoothly:

- We advise you to check in advance whether there is sufficient mobile phone signal and/or broadband connectivity in the area where the workers will take and register their tests.
    - For mobile phone signal, a basic mobile phone signal coverage check can be carried out using the area's postcode.
    - The Ofcom website also provides a broadband and mobile coverage checker.
    - If you are having problems with your broadband or wifi connection, your Internet Service Provider may be able to help.
    - If you cannot get connected either through mobile phone or broadband, please contact the Scottish Government COVID-19 Seasonal Agricultural Workers Testing Team at sawsupport@gov.scot.
- If the computer or phone is being used by multiple people, please make sure that it is disinfected before and after each use to ensure no cross-contamination occurs.
- The worker will need to have the following pieces of information to hand:
    - The **barcode** for the test. This can be found on the box, on the test tube, and on the instructions that come with the test – see the red circles on the photo below. They should keep a record of this barcode with their passport/visa for future reference – if the instruction leaflet contains a barcode, they can use that, otherwise they will need to take a photo of the barcode, or write down the barcode number.



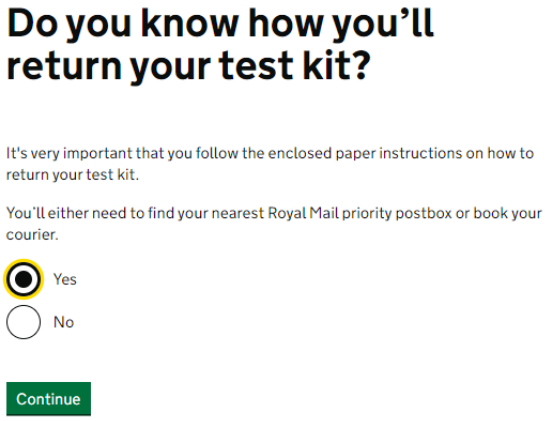
    - A **mobile phone number**. This can be their own mobile phone number, if they have one, or a shared one. If multiple people use the same mobile number to register their tests, everyone using that number will be able to see the personal information and results of the others who use that number. If the individual does not have access to a

mobile phone number they should call the helpline on 119 who can support them.

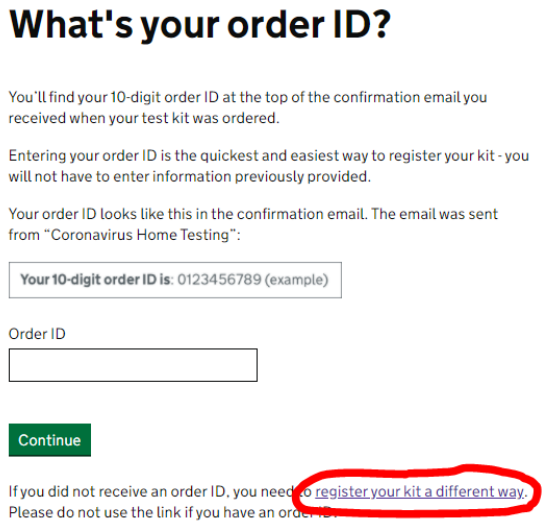
- The **address and postcode** of their accommodation (rather than the farm).

If you use the online test registration form

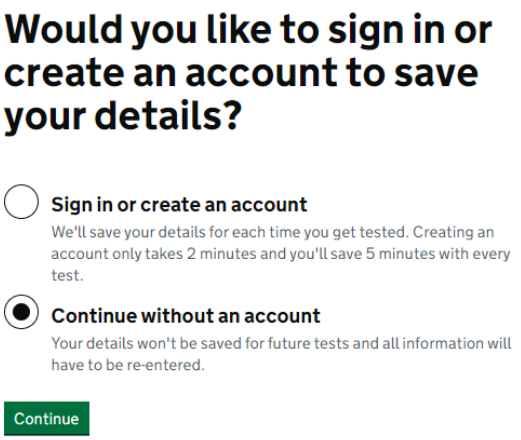
When asked if you know how you will return your test kit, please select “yes” (as shown in the screenshot on the right). Please note you will not be following the return instructions that come with the test, you need to follow the process outlined in the “Returning Completed Tests” section below.



When asked to enter your order ID, please click on the “register your kit in a different way” link at the bottom for the form (as shown in the screenshot on the right).



You will be given the option to create an account, or to continue the process without an account. You can select either option, but be aware that the worker will require an email address to create an account.



Returning completed tests

Once the test(s) have been carried out and registered:

- Collect the tests in a box marked “Completed Tests”. This box should be easy to clean, and the completed tests should be kept separate from unused test kits so that there is no danger of cross contamination. Ideally you would place the box close to the testing terminal, if there is enough space.

- Take test(s) to the location you specified on the online form you completed before the workers arrived in the UK. This could be the distribution hub you collected your tests from originally. Or, if you anticipate having no more than four completed test kits per day, and the distance will make it difficult for you to return these to one of the distribution hubs, there may be an opportunity to use a local priority postbox.

- In order for the tests to remain effective, they should be returned within 36 hours of being taken.

Test results

There is separate guidance on what happens when the worker receives their results.