**Coronavirus (COVID-19) Mitigation Protocol for AHDB staff Ultrasound Scanning Sheep and Cattle – 20th May 2020**

**Ultrasound Scanning Services**

The sheep and beef ultrasound scanning services provided by Signet are an important part of Signet’s breeding improvement programme. Clients have been made aware that in the absence of scanning data they can still [provide weight records](https://www.signetdata.com/news/posts/2020/march/performance-recording-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/) for their stock and receive a robust genetic evaluation, but we know that many want to use the service if safe to do so.

This document outlines AHDB’s current approach to the provision of scanning services.

**Background**

COV-Sars2 can be spread and infect a person through:

* Breathing in the exhaled droplets from an infected person; an asymptomatic person or person infected but not yet showing symptoms (24 – 48 hours prior) who coughs or sneezes close to you or even if very close face to face contact breathes or talks to you (expelling fine droplets);
* Contacting contaminated surfaces (from someone who is infected) with your hands and subsequently touching your mouth, eyes, face etc.; and
* Direct personal physical contact with an infected person e.g. shaking hands with someone who is infectious and who has contaminate their hands

The entry into the body is through the nose, mouth and eyes. Coronavirus does not ‘float’ around in the air. After being exhaled through sneezes or coughs in droplets the virus soon settles onto the persons own body, the ground, nearby surfaces or people.

Prevention or mitigation is therefore

1. To ensure (so far as is reasonably practicable) that staff do not come into contact with an infected person
2. Observe social distancing guidance
3. Prevent infection through contaminated surfaces, followed by touching of the mouth, nose, face or eyes
4. Regular effective handwashing
5. Normal good hygiene and biosecurity

Staff that can’t work will include:-

* Those that are in a vulnerable category
* Those showing signs of the illness or sharing the house with people showing signs of the illness

AHDB Staff won’t go onto farms that:

* Are further than 125 miles from a Signet technician. (At the current time to avoid the need for overnight stays)
* Have had a confirmed or suspected case of Covid19 in the last 14 days.
* Are voluntarily self-isolating (for whatever reason).

Additional staff requirements

In addition to standard scanning kit, Signet staff need to take

* Refreshments (as they can’t use farm refreshments)
* Hand sanitiser
* Extra soap & baby wipes
* Extra paper towels to dry hands
* Disposable gloves
* Anti-histamine (where required) to reduce the symptoms of hay fever – and thus touching the nose and mouth.
* Disposable bags
* Spare overalls

**Standard Operating Procedures for AHDB staff providing ultrasound scanning services during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak**

1. **Before the visit**

Before the visit clients will be contacted to ensure conditions are suitable, the protocol known, a disclaimer returned (electronically returned to AHDB) and any required mitigations have taken place.

1. **Hygiene**

* Apply gloves prior to opening gates on arrival / departure.
* Prior to travel staff will wash hands with soap and hand sanitiser
* No shaking of hands between AHDB representative and farm staff.
* AHDB to set up own equipment and farm staff to set up weigh crate and sheep trailer.
* During the course of scanning, alcohol hand sanitiser will be available.
* All parties avoid touching your face and if you need to do this, you must wash your hands thoroughly sanitise before and after.
  + We recommend AHDB staff are clean shaven, in part to aid the fitting of a face mask or snood, in the event of an emergency.
* On leaving the farm. Disinfect kit in the normal manner and finally wash hands. Please note, the team already use FAM30 for washing boots and equipment; which is an anti-viral disinfectant.
* Ask farm staff to open gates for departure.
* AHDB already use clean clothes for every visit, with all equipment and boots disinfected between farms.
* Staff using toilet facilities are reminded to use soap and hand sanitiser.
* At the end of the day car handles and other high risk surfaces within the vehicle will be wiped down.
* Staff will change their clothing and wash hands (again), immediately upon re-entering their house.

1. **Prevention – follow the NHS advice on prevention (below).**

* Wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
* Use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
* Wash your hands as soon as you get home
* Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
* Put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
* Do not touch your ears, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean.

This must be done both at work and at home.

1. **Social distancing**

While setting up equipment, AHDB staff must exercise social distancing from all staff, including many who will have been in a self-isolating group since lockdown.

This means staying more than 2 metres apart from each other. Scanning equipment must be set up so that the operator and farm staff avoid being “face to face”.

Contact with non-essential staff will be kept to a minimum, including children and vulnerable adults.

The 2 metre rule should be adopted during scanning, wherever possible.

This may mean:

* Extra hurdles placed between weighing and scanning stations – to increase the distance between operations.
* (If appropriate) clients providing weights separately to muscle and fat measurements.
* It will be at the discretion of the Technician to determine if a 2 metre gap has been sufficiently established and a safe work space provided.

*Please note, we recognise that these extra measures will slow down the ultrasound scanning process and it may take longer to scan flocks than in a normal season, as staff won’t be helping the Technician to load lambs into the scanning create. This is unavoidable this year.*

Any essential or unavoidable animal handling and restraint that involves getting closer to another person than 2m must be done side by side (not face to face) and for as short a time as possible.

1. **Overnight stays, traveling and traveling distances**

At the current time, AHDB staff are not staying away from their homes overnight – as this presents an additional risk to staff (and many hotels are not open). This protocol will be revisited, as Government advice changes and hotels become available.

For this reason, visits will be limited to those within 125 miles of an AHDB staff member’s home, to allow both reasonable time to travel and scan livestock.

AHDB staff will not travel together unless from the same household. If more than staff member is to be involved in the visit they will travel in separate vehicles.

1. **Refreshments and toilet breaks**

AHDB staff are instructed to try to avoid entering farm premises wherever possible or sharing refreshments. AHDB staff will take their own refreshments with them.

1. **Paperwork**

Where possible, AHDB are able to minimise the paperwork left on farms, subject to client wishes. Clients should be aware that scanning reports can now be downloaded from [www.signetdata.com](http://www.signetdata.com)

Contracts will be completed by AHDB staff – clients will be informed of the total amount and if in agreement, AHDB staff can initial on behalf of the client. Digital copies to be sent to Kay Shone, AHDB.

1. **Tracking movements of AHDB staff**

Signet will keep a central register of where scanners plan to go (or have been) – as well as a list of those that don’t want scanning.

* Date, client name, breed, postcode, technician attending

1. **Post Service Follow-Up**

Due to the risk posed by people that are asymptomatic, we will ask all clients using the service to let us know immediately if they or anyone they come into contact shows signed of the illness within 14 days of Signet staff leaving the farm.

**Appendix 1. Disclaimer for clients using Signet Breeding Services**

In requesting AHDB staff to come to my premises I have read the standard operating procedures that AHDB have developed to minimise the risk of COVID19.

1. My household is currently abiding by government advice with regard to minimising the spread of COVID19.

No-one in my household has knowingly been in contact with the virus in the last 14 days. I will inform AHDB staff of any contact my family has had with the virus.

1. I will work with AHDB to provide a safe working environment for AHDB staff including, the following:-

* Access to plentiful water and wash down facilities for AHDB staff and their equipment.
* Symptomatic or isolating farm staff must not assist. Contact with non-essential staff will be kept to a minimum, including children and vulnerable adults.

AHDB staff are to be kept 2 metres away from farm staff at all times, this may mean:-

* Adapting a race to increase the distance between staff members (fitting extra hurdles).
* Considering sending weights separately to muscle and fat measurements, if the two jobs can’t be completed together in the same area.

I realise this may mean that scanning will take longer this year.

1. I will let AHDB know if anyone in the ‘household’ or ‘contact group’ develops COVID symptoms within 14 days of this visit. This will allow AHDB staff to self-isolate.

Signed…………………. Dated:……………………..

Visit date: ………………….