In 1945, the president of the United States asked for a Spanish version of our national anthem. He hoped to build good will with Spanish-speaking Americans and people from Latin America as we fought to preserve our nation through World War II.

Now, as our nation is fighting COVID-19, “El Perdón Estrellado” is being played again to honor the contributions of Latino people during this crisis. This includes the important role played by thousands in agriculture and food processing. Without you farmers could not feed the country.

At this difficult time, we have two major priorities: Making sure our farms can remain successful despite a dramatic drop in milk prices and keeping all the people who work on our farms and dairy plants safe. Our association is working to financially support our farms with the government’s help and we are promoting strategies for staying healthy at work.

When this virus has been defeated, we will increase our advocacy efforts for our workers. That includes working on a driver’s permit that people can use in Wisconsin regardless of their immigration status and trying to get a special visa that will work for dairy farm workers. As we fight for those changes, we will be sure to remind people of the important role immigrants played as we struggled with COVID-19.
 Keeping employees safe and healthy
What are dairy farms doing to keep employees safe during COVID-19

By Elsie Gonzalez M.S., Motiva Consulting

Dairy farms are using a combination of control measures and ongoing education to keep employees healthy and safe by minimizing the entrance of COVID-19 to the farm and spread from one shift to another and among people within a shift.

Clean and disinfect surfaces, tools and machinery

Farms are setting specific times within a shift or at the start and end of shifts to clean and disinfect surfaces that people touch such as tables, counters, door handles, fridge handles, lockers, buttons, computers, panels and time clocks. Similarly, farms are establishing a disinfection protocol for the cabin of tractors and skid steers at the start and end of a shift, or when switching operators within a shift.

Minimize unnecessary interaction of farm staff

Avoid interaction between shifts and staff from different departments, as well as, limiting interaction between groups of people that do not allow six feet separation.

Limit the number of people in locker rooms. Shifts leaving and arriving should not be in the locker rooms at the same time. Creating temporary additional changing areas or closing lockers so that employees arrive dressed, ready to work or leave right after their shift will avoid employee crossover.

In break rooms, it’s important to minimize the number of people and allow at least six feet of separation between employees. Putting signs on tables and removing extra chairs will prevent gatherings. Also, additional temporary lunch areas can be used. Employees should disinfect their table after eating to protect others.

Group meetings should only be done in an open area that allows six feet separation such as outside, in a large shop or machinery storage.

Limited visitors

Outsiders cannot interact with employees, unless strictly necessary. Those necessary to visit the farm will maintain social distance with employees and call when they arrive. Visitors include sales people, consultants, contractors and veterinarians or others that visit the farm regularly. Visitors need to call before arriving to receive direction of where to meet or know the location where they are leaving supplies. Farms can add extra signage for delivery people and communicate with regular visitors about new delivery policies. Delivery personnel cannot enter offices. Designating temporary delivery areas away from employee working sites or high employee traffic areas will help minimize the spread of COVID-19. If a signature is needed, employees should use their own pen.

Monitor employees’ health and be proactive

Taking extra precaution can help keep employees healthy. This includes:

• Taking temperatures at the arrival and in the middle of the shift. Designate a person responsible for taking temperatures on each shift, and a farm contact person to communicate concerns and assessing employee health in a case by case scenario.

• Providing face masks, either disposable, multiple use or hand-made

• Several hand sanitizer stations

• Bathrooms should contain disinfectant soap and disposable towels at all times

• If employees are out of the state or in high-risk areas, they can be asked to stay away from the farm for a specific number of days.

Educate employees

Keep employees informed about the symptoms to look for, how the virus is spread, what social distancing means and good hygiene practices. If employees feel sick or someone in their house has COVID-19 symptoms, they need to stay home and explain the implications of not doing it.

Share the reason and duration for the new changes. Situations will be evaluated every week to make necessary changes as the items unfold.

Inform employees about positive cases. We don’t need to share specific names. Simply share there was a confirmed case, the implications of it and what measures the farm is doing to keep employees safe and healthy.

Be clear with the farm leave sick policies and share any temporary modifications to your policy. When employees understand the policy they are more likely to be honest about their health, be open and stay home when they are sick.

Send radio or text messages every hour to remind employees of social distancing and hygiene practices.

Post signs around the farm to remind others of social distancing and practicing good hygiene.
What to know about a virus
Understanding the basics of a virus and how to protect yourself and others

By Jorge Delgado, Alltech

The world is worried about a new virus that has caused serious health and economic problems. We watch the news every day and wonder how we can take care of our families through something unknown, something that we don't see or understand completely.

The most efficient way to combat COVID-19 is through education of understanding what a virus is, how it works and how it's transmitted from a sick person to a healthy person.

What is a virus?

A virus is an infectious agent that can only reproduce within the cells of other organisms, such as plants, animals and humans. Viruses are made up of a genetic material that has the information of how to create more viruses. This material is surrounded by several layers of proteins and fat. When infecting a cell, viruses "force" the cell of that organism (plants, animals, humans, etc.) to make more copies of the virus and form new viruses that will infect more cells of that organism and thus cause a disease.

Viruses are too small to be visible to the naked eye. This is why we need to understand the reasons to follow strict hygiene measures in our work and at home.

Virus mode of action

If a person who has a virus sneezes, coughs or talks, thousands of viruses are expelled through the air in the saliva. If these drops come into our mouth, nose, eyes or if we touch our faces with our virus-contaminated hands, the virus enters through our throat and into the lungs. In the lungs the virus begins to multiply causing respiratory diseases. These respiratory diseases may be mild, moderate, severe or may not have any symptoms or at minimum a cough and fever. This is why it's so important to keep the distance from other people.

By taking care of your health, you are taking care of the health of your family, co-workers and those who depend on your work.

Important hygiene measures

Hygiene measures are put in place where there are people around us.

The most important:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap to destroy the virus.
- Keep a distance of at least two meters (the length of a cow) from other people.
- Disinfect objects of frequent contact.
- Do not share work tools that are used near the face.
- Don't touch your face without washing your hands first.
- Wear masks according to CDC recommendations
- Follow and respect hygiene protocols, such as coughing into your sleeve and not on your hands or in the air.

*all pictures are owned by Jorge Delgado, Alltech T2R.

Don't touch your face without washing your hands first.

Wear masks according to CDC recommendations as an essential worker.

Cough into your sleeve and not on your hands or in the air.
At some point, all of us have dealt with issues in the workplace. This could be anything from a personal disagreement with a coworker to issues with company procedures. In order to be successful in any job, we have to learn how to resolve issues at work.

When deciding to take action to resolve an issue, it is important to:

1. Take time to think about what the issue really is and how you can help solve the issue.
2. Think through what the problems is and who to talk to in order to solve the problem.
3. What is the best possible outcome and how can that be accomplished.
4. Think about ways you can compromise.
5. Most of the time, it's about meeting in the middle and coming to a solution together.

If your issue is with another employee, think about if the issue is personal or directly related to the job you both perform. If it's a personal issue, see if you both can agree to leave your differences outside of work. Your job is in a professional environment, so it is best to try and keep personal issues out of it. If the issue is directly related to work, first try to work out the issue with the other person directly. Schedule a time to talk with that person where you both can be calm and prepared for the conversation. See if you can resolve your issues together and come to an agreement. If you cannot come to an agreement, or if the issue is seriously affecting the job, it's best to ask your supervisor for help.

If your issue is with a company protocol, procedures, time off, etc., bring these issues to your supervisor. It is a good idea to let your supervisor know you would like to talk about the issue and set a time for you both to meet and talk about it. This gives the supervisor time to think about the issue as well as to make time to sit down and talk about it. Make sure you come to the meeting with your thoughts on the issue and potential solutions. Keep in mind the supervisor may not always be able to make the changes you would like, so there may need to be compromise. It is important to stay calm and rational in these conversations, and to try and see the other person's point of view.

If these options still do not work, you may need to take your concern to the farm manager or owner. It really is best to try and work through the issues with the other person and/or your supervisor, but if it is a very serious issue that you think needs attention, then ask for a time to talk with the lead person.

Remember, be patient, fair and try to see other's point of view. With a little bit of patience and planning, you can work through many of the issues that can come up in the workplace.