

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) update #7

Thursday, 30 April 2020

Guide to COVID-19 in the orchard and packing shed



Citrus Australia has updated its guide for the citrus industry on dealing with COVID-19 in the orchard and packing shed. [You can download it here.](#) **New additions are highlighted in yellow.**

The updated version has a **personal disclosure statement** that businesses can utilise for new employees.

It also has a **checklist** to help businesses manage risk, support their workforce, deal with suspect and confirmed cases of coronavirus, and other related issues.

Citrus Australia COVID-19 webpage

Citrus Australia has created a specific COVID-19 (Coronavirus) page on our website. [You can access it here.](#) This website is updated regularly with more current information, announcements, new government policies and notices to be aware of.

Marketing and communication

- Citrus Australia has formed a 'closed' Facebook group for citrus growers only. It is a grower-led group where you can share information on any issue or management practice. Visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/CitrusAustralia and click the blue 'Visit Group' button under the big Vitamin C banner.



- Citrus Australia has updated the Aussie Mandarins and Aussie Oranges Facebook sites to promote this season's citrus under the hash tag #VitaminCitrus. As part of the promotion, we are sharing images and videos posted by growers.

You can follow them here ([click here for Aussie Mandarins](#); [click here for Aussie Oranges](#)) and please share the posts to help us reach a wider audience.

- #MandyMonday is back! All mandarin growers can post images and videos (growing, eating, juggling mandarins – everything is welcome) with the hash tag #MandyMonday and these will be shared on the [We Heart Citrus \(click here\)](#) Facebook pages, as well as the Aussie Mandarins page. Post and share!
- We are asking growers to take a short video of themselves on their smart phone in the orchard to help promote the season. Consumers love seeing where their food comes from and the growers behind it. There is an example in our closed Facebook group. Post your videos on your own site and let us know, or send to Stephen Cooke on 0427 124 437.
- Citrus Australia social media tiles are available on our [website here](#) for you to share. These tiles are to help raise awareness of the health benefits of citrus and we encourage you to use them on your social media sites and share them widely whenever you see them.

Case studies: Have you prepared your business for COVID-19?



COVID-19 (coronavirus) will cause significant changes to your business this harvest, including potential difficulties in sourcing labour.

All businesses should have plans in place to meet government requirements for social distancing before the start of harvest. These changes will enable you to keep your family and staff safe during the season.

Citrus Australia strongly advises all businesses to consider the changes that will need to be made to ensure social distancing, and implement them now, if they haven't already.

There are case studies documenting the changes Australian citrus businesses have made for this season in [the Citrus](#)

[Australia COVID-19 Guide](#) on pages 48-51. [You can also read changes made by Central Fruit Packers in Mundubbera here.](#)

Labour and accommodation announcement

State governments are currently preparing details on how businesses in each state should manage workers under COVID-19 guidelines.

On 29 April 2020, the Queensland Premier made an announcement regarding further requirements of seasonal workers to ensure the spread of COVID-19 does not increase. This includes a five-point plan during harvest covering self-isolation; a health management plan; communication; additional compliance measures and; ways to ensure local disaster management groups have appropriate information. [You can view this document with questions and answers provided by QDAF.](#) **Citrus Australia has highlighted and underlined any relevant new information.**



This announcement has raised many more questions as to the correct implementation of this, including what exactly constitutes a seasonal worker, and if health plans are now required for all workers, not just those crossing the border. QDAF has advised that clarification on all of these issues will be provided in writing in the coming days. Citrus Australia will provide further updates as they come to hand.

Movement of seasonal workers

Seasonal Workers are now being moved interstate from citrus growing regions to elsewhere.

In the Murray Valley, Seasonal Workers have now finished with the tablegrape season and are being moved out of the region to other parts of Australia for work. If you require any more workers in the coming weeks and would like to use the [Seasonal Worker Programme](#), please contact them ASAP as it's unlikely these workers will be moved back into the region once they've moved away. SWP Information Line (02) 6240 5234, SeasonalWorker@dese.gov.au OR Matt Holland, Dept Employment 0436 920 170

Changes to Horticulture Award

The NFF Horticulture Council (which Citrus Australia is now a member of) has approached the Australian Workers Union (AWU) seeking support to changes to the Horticulture Award to allow growers more flexibility to manage the impact of coronavirus on their workplace.

The changes proposed are:

- To casual employees' overtime arrangements to facilitate social distancing and relieve some of problems associated with finding staff and engaging transient workers.
- To remove the requirement to pay a shift penalty so growers can work smaller teams in staggered shifts.
- To enable growers to direct employees to take annual leave where there are downturns in work demands and to enable farms to enforce social isolation.
- To allow growers to direct workers to perform alternative duties, to address fluctuations in work needs and address changes in patterns of work.

The variations would be in effect for the duration of the pandemic; the Commission has introduced other COVID-19 changes to Awards with effect through to the end of June 2020 and scope to renew as necessary.

The Horticulture Council requires evidence to support this case. Citrus Australia is seeking feedback from growers and packers on the economic and social impacts of COVID-19. This would need to be in writing, and you may possibly be required to give verbal evidence. If you can volunteer to do this, please contact kerry.thompson@citrusaustralia.com.au for more information.

Mental health

- The Federal Government has announced a new Beyond Blue coronavirus mental wellbeing service that can be accessed at coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au or via 1800 512 348.
- **Tuesday 12 May** – Webinar: *Mental health in the time of COVID-19*. Hear from former Prime Minister and Chair of Beyond Blue, the Hon. Julia Gillard AC about the early mental health learnings for the community, employers and policymakers. View details [here](#).

Labour

- The new Backpicker app creates a safe and convenient platform for growers to source legitimate workers in Australia, and provides an opportunity for workers to view training videos and learn about safety, biosecurity and so on, as the app develops. It is linked to Facebook, and based on a rating system.

Backpicker would like to give citrus growers the opportunity to finalise the design of the app, by registering as early adopters, advertising available roles, and providing feedback on what could work better for you.

Go to <https://backpicker.com.au/> to view the platform. The app will soon be ready for download on Android and Apple, and is available for FREE. [Click on this link](#) to view a short 4 minute video on how to register. Share your feedback with David via email at david@backpicker.com.au

- We request any anecdotal information growers have on labour hire businesses not passing on the full JobKeeper wage to be forwarded to Citrus Australia.
- Contractors – Many growers utilise labour contractors for their harvest workforce. Please note that if you use a contractor, this does not exclude you from WHS requirements for your workforce. You are equally as responsible for their welfare, and should be particularly mindful if you live in a state with labour hire licencing laws (SA, VIC, QLD), and / or industrial manslaughter laws (QLD, NT). See more information on how to care for your workforce in our Guide to COVID-19.

Price Gouging

Businesses can send any evidence of price gouging through to Citrus Australia.

Exports

- China has approved the 2020 list of Australian citrus orchards and packing houses. From this point on, pack houses should use only the Reg. numbers on the 2020 list for export to China and accredited Export Listing Numbers from Citrus Australia's online registration system.



To ensure sheds select accredited blocks/orchards, check the <KCT Country DAWR Status> section of the Citrus Australia online registration system.

Shed staff should check the system regularly as a block/orchard status can change during the season if protocol requirements are not met.

The DAWE Audit Services Team will complete the status of all blocks/orchards/pack houses within the next couple of weeks. Email AuditServices@awe.gov.au if you have any questions regarding the audit approval process.

For help accessing the online registration system and the Block/orchard status lists, organise a zoom meeting with Nicole Zerveas on 0499 044 111 or at nicole.zerveas@citrusaustralia.com.au

- The COVID-19 pandemic is disrupting business around the globe to differing degrees, and the situation is changing daily. Before exporting citrus to a country affected by COVID-19, it may help to:
 - Check container and dock pathways are still moving and whether adequate customs services are available in destination ports.
 - Allow plenty of time to send documentation - air freight and courier services for documents are delayed worldwide.
 - Assess the financial viability of your customer/s by keeping in touch with trusted sources.
 - Check if there are additional demurrage/port charges if delays occur.

Freshcare

Freshcare participating businesses are required to transition over from FSQ4 to FSQ4.1 for their audit in 2020. All audits from 1 January 2020 will be to FSQ4.1.

Citrus Australia's FSQ4.1 Update online learning session has been developed as a practical, user-friendly, remote-learning option for existing Freshcare participants transitioning from FSQ v4.0 to FSQ v4.1.

If you have been certified to FSQ4.1 previously, or are not an existing Freshcare business, this is not applicable to you.

The online session, together with the Update folder and USB, enable session participants to 'build on' and update their Freshcare manual as they progress through the session, developing business-specific resources in preparation for their 2020 Freshcare audit.

Citrus growers/packers can purchase the FSQ4.1 Update package including 1 Update folder, a USB of FSQ4.1 forms and additional resources, and access to the online learning session.

Visit: <https://citrusaustralia.com.au/events/tc-events/freshcare-fsq-4-1-update-online-learning-session/>



For information contact Nicole Zerveas on 0499 044 111 or Nicole.zerveas@citrusaustralia.com.au

State matters

Victoria

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) will manage individual cases of COVID-19, should you or your workers become infected in Victoria. Workers cannot return to the workplace, unless they have been released by the DHHS. You should call DHHS on 1300 651 160 to gain confirmation that a worker is no-longer infectious before allowing them back into the workplace.

South Australia

The South Australian Government will expand the capacity of the coronavirus hotline with the training for 850 new call centre staff beginning this week. The additional call centre staff will enable the capacity of the centre to increase from 15 seats to 100 with the COVID-19 Information Line operating 7 days a week for 12 hours a day. To contact the COVID-19 Information Line call 1800 253 787. View the Premier's media release [here](#).

NSW

NSW DPI has established a COVID-19 Primary Industries Liaison Team to help primary producers navigate the challenges and impacts of COVID-19 on their business and industry. Email covidinfo@dpi.nsw.gov.au to discuss your individual business or industry circumstances. [You can also visit the NSW COVID-19 page here.](#)

Northern Territory

Chief Health Officer Directions No. 23 - Directions for Gatherings came into force at midnight on 20 April 2020. Directions No. 14 are revoked.

A place where 'NT commercial primary production' is carried out has been added to the list of places exempt from the 10 person rule, provided the occupier has a COVID-19 management plan approved by the CHO. 'NT commercial primary production' is defined as including agribusiness, aquaculture, meat production and commercial fishing.

The directions clarify that a gathering in a private residence is limited to a maximum of 10 people (a gathering of more than 10 people who all live in the same private residence is still allowed) and that, if the people are indoors, there must be no more than one person per 4 square metres.

Growers must have a COVID-19 Management Plan in place if their operation has 10 staff, working, living, eating in one place. Growers should submit plans to the CHO (doh.exempt@nt.gov.au) as a matter of highest priority, as currently plans are taking in

excess of 21 days to process and in many cases are unsuccessful due to lack of information.

Citrus Australia advises growers to read the [Guide to COVID-19 in the orchard & packing shed](#) to compose a management plan.

Queensland

- WorkCover Queensland has provided information on keeping your workplace safe, clean and healthy ([click here](#)).
- Queensland's Agriculture Coordination Officers will support producers, the agriculture industry and local governments to manage COVID-19. Approximately 100 regional economic development, extension, research and biosecurity staff are available to ensure rapid assistance across the state. Support includes assisting producers and industry to access relevant information quickly without having to navigate a myriad of websites and in some cases with limited or no connectivity. Email csc@daf.qld.gov.au to get in touch with an officer or call the Customer Service Centre on 13 25 23.
- In partnership with BDO, Qld Government has delivered three business continuity planning webinars to provide expert support and help you minimise the impact of COVID-19. In the latest webinar, BDO discusses how you can reduce the risk of COVID-19 within an agribusiness context covering the physical, organisational, personnel and workforce accommodation elements of a business continuity plan. You can watch all three webinars and download resources [here](#).

Western Australia

There is no requirement for a 14-day isolation period related to movement within WA. WHMs may move between regions provided they have secured an offer of employment.

Advocacy

Citrus Australia continues to meet with government and industry to share information and combine forces in advocacy. Your feedback is inputted directly into these meetings to put your needs on the agenda and to seek resolutions. Since the last update:

- Participated weekly in the Agriculture Coordination Group Meeting hosted by Queensland Department of Agriculture. Also participated in four working group meetings from this group:
 - Workforce Availability Group
 - Workplace Health and Safety Working Group
 - Business Continuity Working Group
 - Supply Chain and Logistics
- Teleconferences with the NFF Horticulture Council



- Weekly teleconferences with the Queensland Horticulture Council Weekly teleconferences with the Agriculture Victoria COVID-19 stakeholder reference group
- Met with Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA) for an update on COVID-19 matters affecting South Australians.
- Weekly COVID-19 Horticulture Network Meetings with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), WA
- Held grower update meetings as required
- Weekly meetings with the senior executive of the Federal Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) and agriculture industry representatives
- Weekly participation in the NSW DPI Stakeholder Webinar
- Meeting with the Local Emergency Management Committee for Wentworth and Broken Hill Shires in NSW
- Meeting with growers and accommodation providers, and discussions with the North Burnett Mayor, in the Wide Bay-Burnett region
- Weekly meetings with the Wide Bay-Burnett Workforce Requirements Roundtable
- Correspondence with the Department of Primary Industry and Resources Northern Territory
- Discussions with international importers on trade effects