Maryland Agritourism Operations During COVID-19: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION

As an agritourism operator...

Am I able to operate my agritourism operation?  
Agritourism is a broad term (defined in Md. Code, Land Use Art. Section 4-212) that can encompass many types of activities on a farm. This guidance is meant to highlight some of the concerns and restrictions agritourism operators may face. Depending on the nature of the operation, however, there may be state or local Orders, restrictions, recommendations, and/or guidance documents that are more appropriate for the operation or portions of the operation.

On September 1, 2020, Governor Hogan signed a revised Order to authorize the reopening of recreational and entertainment attractions subject to the current guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) regarding social distancing, including, without limitation, avoidance of large gatherings and crowded places. Political subdivisions in Maryland, however, may determine it is necessary to prevent exposure to COVID-19 by restricting agritourism more than is required by the State. To verify if and how an agritourism operation may open safely and legally, an agritourism operator should contact their local health department.

What do I need to do to protect myself, my employees, my customers, and the public from COVID-19?  
All Marylanders are advised to take precautions to slow the spread of COVID-19. According to the CDC, the more people an individual interacts with at an event or gathering and the longer that interaction lasts, the higher the potential risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 and spreading COVID-19. It is absolutely essential that agritourism operators do what they can to reduce the risk of transmission.

How do I prepare my agritourism operation?  
• Develop a plan or checklist for operating consistent with CDC guidance. The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and Maryland Department of Health have created this checklist for employee policies and precautions to help farms implement best practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19. A checklist for each type of activity you offer as part of your agritourism business may be helpful in determining what can and cannot be offered and implementing best practices for each activity. Verify with the local health department which planned activities can be offered safely and legally.

In general, operators are advised to:
• Designate staff to assist visitors with complying with the physical spacing, face covering, and other policies/recommendations established for the operation.
  - Keep customers and workers from grouping too close to one another, in no case closer than 6 feet.
  - Allow for customers to be spaced 6 feet or more apart by installing a marking system to visually demonstrate the recommended social distancing and/or limit the amount of people permitted on hay ride type activities.
  - Designate and post signage indicating the direction of foot traffic in main circulation paths (e.g. farm markets, pick-your-own fields, entry and exit points); consider one-way circulation routes.
  - Verify capacity limits for the operation with your local health department.
  - Require customers and workers to wear face coverings as recommended by the CDC. The Maryland FAQs on Face Coverings is another good resource.
  - Provide face coverings for visitors that arrive without their own.
  - Post mask requirement signs.
  - Increase cleaning and disinfecting, especially frequently touched surfaces, in accordance with CDC guidelines. Areas and amenities that cannot be easily cleaned between customers should remain closed, including slides, inflatable bounce houses, interactive mazes, touch pools and prop-based experiences where physical distancing and sanitation protocols are difficult to manage.
  - Encourage hand washing by customers and staff and provide hand washing stations throughout the operation, at key customer and staff entrances, and contact areas. Stock stations with soap, paper towels, or hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol (60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol)* (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), and no-touch waste containers.

*Note: Many hand sanitizers on the market have been recalled by FDA as unsafe and/or ineffective. Check the FDA list prior to purchasing and/or using hand sanitizers.
Cleaning and Disinfection Guidelines:
Materials are also available in Spanish and Chinese, and updated weekly. Visit: produce.safety@maryland.gov

Food Safety Guidance:
for Events and Gatherings

Guidance for Businesses and Employers:

Additional COVID-19 Resources:

How do I communicate with my customers about COVID-19 preventative measures?

How do I prepare my staff?

Additional COVID-19 Resources:


Food Safety Guidance: The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) has provided specific guidance on food safety here. For more information on farm worker health and hygiene training or other produce safety questions, please email produce.safety@maryland.gov. Additional information is available on the Maryland Department of Agriculture’s (MDA) website.

University of Maryland Extension: The University of Maryland Extension and other state extension programs have worked to create fact sheets regarding COVID-19 for home consumers, retail-food service, grocery shopping, farms and PYOs, and foodbanks. Materials are also available in Spanish and Chinese, and updated weekly. Visit: https://extension.umd.edu/foodsafety.

Cleaning and Disinfection Guidelines: The CDC’s website has general cleaning and disinfection guidelines.