

Guidance for Livestock Auctions During Re-Opening

The state's framework to resume business operations — “Ad Astra: A Plan to Re-Open Kansas” — provides guidance for businesses statewide as they resume operations. As of Tuesday, May 26, 2020, these are no longer enforceable under a statewide executive order, but they remain in place **as recommendations only** for individuals and businesses across Kansas. Statewide travel-related quarantines established by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) are still in effect.

It is important to note that **local governments retain the authority to impose more restrictive orders or provisions**, and there no longer exists a statewide protection for those businesses performing essential functions as previously identified in the Kansas Essential Functions Framework (KEFF). However, the Department of Homeland Security has recognized the food and agriculture sector as a critical infrastructure industry and should be considered as local authorities consider local orders which could restrict continued operations of these critical functions. For a complete list of the essential critical infrastructure workers as defined by DHS, go to: <https://www.cisa.gov/identifying-critical-infrastructure-during-covid-19>.

Licensed Livestock Auction Marketsⁱ and Livestock Breeding Stock Auctionsⁱⁱ are considered part of the critical infrastructure of this state, and your contribution to the state and local community is critical. **We strongly encourage you to exercise ongoing safety measures** to ensure that your employees remain healthy and you can continue to function, and also to assure your customers and community that you provide a safe, reliable environment.

How do the current Re-Opening Plan recommendations apply to livestock auctions?

- **Contact your local health department** where your event is located to find out what rules and regulations govern that county.
- Know the current statewide travel-related quarantines that are in effect, which can be found on KDHE's website at: www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/175/Travel-Exposure-Related-Isolation-Quaran.
- Managers of all livestock auctions should continue to implement operational changes to protect their employees and customers.

- The following best practices have been developed to ensure continuity of operations and protection of animal health and welfare while also safeguarding the health of the staff, vendors and buyers.
- Central to the efforts to protect public health within your operation are these principles:
 - Maintain at least six feet of distance between individuals, be they customers or employees, as much as possible.
 - Follow fundamental cleaning and public health practices detailed on the Kansas Department of Health and Environment website at [coronavirus.kdhe.gov](https://www.kdhe.gov/coronavirus).
 - Avoid instances in which large groups are in one location and unable to maintain a six-foot distance with only infrequent or incidental moments of closer proximity. This includes limiting areas and instances in which physical distancing is not maintained, such as in entrances, lobbies, break rooms, cafeterias, etc.

Best Practices

Despite being essential functions, the Kansas Department of Agriculture strongly recommends that auctions make efforts to implement measures intended to limit the spread of COVID-19 and protect your employees and customers, including but not limited to: social distancing, remote or online bidding, and limiting the total number of persons in attendance. In communities with continued “stay-at-home” orders or other additional restrictions, operations should implement these practices to comply with local orders.

- Use technology to host virtual online sales if at all possible and encourage buyers to utilize this service.
- For Livestock Breeding Stock Auctions, encourage buyers to observe sale offerings in advance (if opportunity is provided) and submit bids online or to sale management and/or sale representatives.
- For Licensed Livestock Auction Markets, limit attendees to registered buyers only, keeping the number of people onsite to a minimum.
- In all situations, attendees should maintain at least a six-foot separation between each other at all times.
- Sellers (consigners) at Licensed Livestock Auction Markets should remain in their vehicles during the unloading process, and not enter the livestock market indoor facility.
- Encourage customers to make arrangements to pick up checks in the parking lot if they can't wait for the mail.
- Instruct any employee or buyer exhibiting symptoms of illness, or exposed to anyone who is ill, to remain home and request that anyone who is a member of a population of heightened vulnerability avoid areas where people are gathering.
- Provide ample opportunities for attendees and employees to wash hands following the Centers for Disease Control's best practices.
- Clean and disinfect all commonly used areas frequently including restrooms, and restock regularly with soap, paper towels, and hand sanitizer.

- Close all areas of the auction facility that are not directly associated with the sale to prevent people from co-mingling, including common seating areas.
- Licensed cafes within a livestock auction market should also implement health and safety practices to protect employees and customers.
- Clearly communicate and enforce your policies.

For current information about Kansas' response to COVID-19, go to the Kansas COVID-19 Resource Center at www.covid.ks.gov.

ⁱ Licensed Livestock Auction Markets

Kansas has approximately 45 livestock auction markets (sometimes referred to as sale barns) that provide an essential critical infrastructure role in the food supply chain. Consigners to these markets are area livestock producers who are reliant on the markets' services for the sale of their commodity and to sustain the food supply chain. In addition, these auctions are crucial for timely and transparent price discovery needs, which is relied upon by the supply chain within Kansas and throughout the multi-state region.

ⁱⁱ Livestock Breeding Stock Auction

Kansas has many livestock producers who breed and raise genetically superior animals as breeding stock for other producers. In some instances, these animals are sold in a breeding stock or production sale, often held at the farm or ranch of the breeder. These sales usually occur in the fall and spring so livestock producers may restock their breeding herd for the next breeding season. Breeding stock purchased in the spring are critical for the crop of newborn animals in 2021 and will help sustain the food supply chain. While online sales are becoming a popular avenue for Livestock Breeding Stock Auctions, it's not feasible for all sales to occur without a live presence of buyers.