

## ***Social Distancing Guidelines on AWA Inspections***

This document provides additional guidance on conducting quality inspections while maintaining a safe social distance, and applies to inspections that have been determined to be eligible for inspection based on the tiered plan in the approved Standard Operating Procedures for Resuming Facility Inspections During the COVID-19 Pandemic. If all other criteria in this SOP are met, inspections can be conducted in green counties and in grey counties that meet CDC's low risk criteria (fewer than 7 new cases/day in the last 14 days). Data for determining eligibility for inspection can be found on the [USDA COVID-19 Dashboard Maps](#) and this [CDC data source](https://usafacts.org/visualizations/coronavirus-covid-19-spread-map) (https://usafacts.org/visualizations/coronavirus-covid-19-spread-map).

APHIS considers the conduct of essential activities in grey counties, including inspections, to be appropriate, provided that inspectors use PPE (masks and face shields) and social distancing as detailed in this document. Animal Care has authorized inspections in grey counties that are low risk according to the Resuming Inspections SOP.

Follow the Standard Operating Procedures for Resuming Facility Inspections During the COVID-19 Pandemic for all procedures not outlined here, including contacting the facility, performing self-screening and screening facility representatives, and donning and doffing procedures for PPE. **N95s are not to be used by field employees solely for COVID prevention.**

### Required PPE for inspections in grey counties:

1. Cloth or paper mask
2. Face shield
3. Gloves

Shoe/boot covers may be worn if necessitated by standard biosecurity practices or facility type. Follow all standard animal facility protocols, including wearing facility provided PPE when requested to do so.

Definition: Social distance/distancing - refers to the distance between the inspector and any other individuals present for or involved in the conduct of the inspection

### ***Social Distancing Guidelines for Conducting an Inspection in a Grey County:***

**If they are not already wearing one, request that the facility representative wear a mask during the inspection and make a paper mask available to them if needed.** If they refuse to wear a mask, explain that AC is requesting this to ensure inspectors' safety, just as you wear your mask to protect them. Ask if there is someone else available who will wear a mask. If they still decline, you may choose to proceed with the inspection if you feel it is safe to do so: e.g., the facility is well ventilated or outdoors. If you do not feel that it would be safe to continue with the inspection, do not conduct the inspection and contact your SACS.

While on inspection, **the inspector must maintain at least 6 feet of social distance between the inspector and the facility representative(s). Do not come within 6 feet of a licensee or registrant at any**

**time. If you feel unsafe at any point, or the licensee/registrant is unwilling to maintain at least 6 feet of distance between you, stop the inspection and contact your SACS.**

Be alert to the fact that it can be a challenge to understand speech with PPE on, which may result in one or both parties subconsciously closing the distance – remain vigilant and aware of the distance between yourself and others and take appropriate measures to maintain at least 6 feet of social distance. Be clear and explicit about maintaining that distance throughout the inspection.

Conduct as much of the inspection outdoors as possible. Be aware of your surroundings and of weather conditions that may impact your safety and take appropriate precautions. Follow existing guidance for alternatives to in-person records review. If inspection activity must be conducted indoors, **maintain at least 6 feet of social distance at all times** and limit the time in enclosed spaces with others. Minimize questions and discussion while indoors to reduce the generation of droplets and airborne particles. You may choose to conduct the indoor portion of the inspection intermittently, taking breaks every 15 mins to allow for some dispersal of accumulated particles and discussion of inspection findings in a better ventilated/outdoor area.

If an indoor space that must be inspected is small and/or poorly ventilated, **do not stand in the small space with the facility representative**. Alternatives include having them stand in the doorway while you inspect the space, if it is safe for you and the animals to do so, or requesting that they record video of the indoor space for your review in a well-ventilated area. **Remember to consider as contaminated any equipment that has been handled by the licensee and use appropriate biosafety precautions to prevent cross contamination.**

When conducting inspections at breeding facilities, it may not be possible to pull the usual 10% of animals for closer examination unless the animals can be safely contained (such as in a portable enclosure) while still maintaining 6 feet of social distance from the facility representative – your safety is the priority. Consider the use of binoculars or other equipment that facilitates quality visual inspection from a safe distance. **You must maintain at least 6 feet of social distance at all times during the inspection.**

If you have veterinary care or other concerns about a specific animal that needs to be examined more closely, consider whether the animal can be placed in a separate/temporary/portable enclosure that allows closer inspection while the licensee maintains 6 feet of social distance. You may request that the licensee handle the animal so that the inspector can take photographs or videos from a 6-foot distance that can be reviewed for a more detailed examination of the animal. You may request that the facility representative take photographs from a closer vantage if additional views are needed. Again, consider the use of binoculars or other equipment that facilitates quality visual inspection while maintaining at least 6 feet of social distance. **Remember to consider as contaminated any equipment that has been handled by the licensee and use appropriate biosafety precautions to prevent cross contamination.**

**\* These guidelines will be reviewed every 3 months and sunset when conditions no longer require the use of social distancing and/or enhanced PPE**