

# Seasonal Agricultural Workers in Scotland - PCR Testing Approach

May 2021

# Stakeholder support pack – PCR testing on Scottish farms

The purpose of this document is to provide Scotland's agricultural industry with accurate and factual information about the coronavirus testing measures being implemented on farms to maximise public health protection, minimise the risk of coronavirus outbreaks and to enable the farms to continue food production operations.

It explains the rationale for the approach, including the use of Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests for workers travelling to Scotland from abroad, and provides key information for both employers and employees about why the approach is critical in protecting public health and the importance of workers participating.

It also provides information and links to online resources and organisations providing support for staff who are unable to work because they need to self-isolate due to a positive test or because they have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive.

This is the first version of the support pack. An updated version will follow shortly which contains additional information, website links and resources to explain the context for the testing approach, as well as step by step information about how to take a PCR test.

Any queries about the information in the pack should be sent to [covid-19.policy.media@gov.scot](mailto:covid-19.policy.media@gov.scot). This also includes specific requests for additional details to be included in future versions.

# What are we doing?

In line with existing international travel restrictions, people arriving from outside the Common Travel Area to work on farms in Scotland need to isolate for 10 days.

The measures require all workers to be tested for coronavirus on days two and eight of self-isolation to identify positive cases and so that new strains of coronavirus can be identified quickly and effectively to protect public health on the farms and in the wider community. It also means that workers can only spend the isolation period on farm accommodation – no other living arrangement is permitted

In Scotland, PCR tests and Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests are already widely used. PCR tests are more effective at identifying positive cases and will quickly and effectively identify anyone who has coronavirus, including variants of concern.

The decision to use PCR tests on farms has been developed with the agricultural industry drawing on the most up to date clinical and scientific advice.

The approach is designed to protect public health by finding cases quickly and breaking the chains of transmission so that cases do not increase and lead to outbreaks. Finding cases quickly enables public health action to be taken and keeps farms open so that food supplies are maintained.

Where positive cases do occur, guidance is clear on the steps that staff and employers need to take. Effective support mechanisms are in place both to advise farms and to help workers to access the financial assistance which is available to them if they cannot work because they need to self-isolate.

# Why is this happening?

The coronavirus testing approach in Scotland focuses on frontline services and key industries, developing and adopting measures which protect public health and reduce the risk of outbreaks.

The food production industry is a key part of Scotland's economy and food supply system, and the role of seasonal agricultural workers is key within that system. This testing approach enables a key workforce to travel to and work in Scotland so that the fruit and vegetable sector can operate effectively during its peak production period.

Fruit and vegetable production is not only an important part of Scotland's economy (£144.2M in 2019) but it is also a major part of the UK food supply chain.

This testing approach is about making sure there are robust public health measures in the farm workplaces and in the living environments of the workers. If the approach is adopted successfully on all farms in Scotland it offers significant protection to wider local communities and the rest of Scotland from the risk of coronavirus outbreaks and the importation of new variants.

PCR testing is already in use across Scotland and the rest of the UK. In other areas of testing, if someone tests positive with an LFD test then they must have a follow-up PCR test to confirm that they currently have coronavirus. For farms in Scotland, workers are legally required to take two PCR tests during their self-isolation period – the first on day 2 and again on day 8.

# Why is this happening?

As Scotland progresses towards summer and restrictions are eased, people move around much more. As this happens, testing continues to be crucially important in identifying cases and breaking transmission chains to prevent outbreaks. The breaking of transmission chains is key to continuing to reduce restrictions.

PCR tests are more effective at identifying positive cases, making them particularly well suited to use in workplace or industry setting including food production.

# Objectives of Testing Approach



## Protect

Those at highest risk, and to prevent transmission in high-consequence settings



## Find

Positive cases, including variants of concern, to help reduce transmission in workplaces and prevent outbreaks

### Purpose:

- To quickly and effectively identify cases imported into Scotland through international travel, particularly variants of concern
- To break the chains of transmission and prevent outbreaks.
- To enable the food supply industry to operate during its peak production period.

### The technology:

- Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test looks for the genetic material of the virus
  - Requires a lab result
  - High sensitivity helps to effectively identify positive cases
  - Results normally available within 24 hours
  - Safe and already widely used

# Key messages for employers

- It is now a legal requirement for agricultural workers coming to Scotland from outside the UK to take two PCR tests while in self-isolation. The Polymerase Chain Reaction test works by looking for genetic material of the virus.
- The aim is to quickly and effectively identify cases imported into Scotland through international travel, particularly variants of concern, so that outbreaks are prevented.
- Businesses and employees who take part in testing are playing their part in vital efforts to defeat coronavirus, keep communities and Scotland safe.
- The requirement for international travellers to self-isolate and undergo testing has been in place for all travellers across the UK since February 2021.
- Not everyone who has coronavirus will have symptoms so it is important that employers understand the testing approach and act responsibly, ensuring their staff understand why the tests are required and take part.
- By finding cases quickly and effectively, you are helping to break transmission chains and prevent outbreaks. Asking people to self-isolate with the proper support in place means that your farms can continue food production.
- The use of PCR testing on Scottish farms has been developed with the agricultural industry, representative bodies and drawing on the latest clinical and scientific advice.

# Key messages for employers

- By ensuring that the people you are employing understand the approach and participate, you are helping to keep them and the wider communities near your farms safe.
- Support is available for workers who test positive and need to self-isolate. Information can be found at: [www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot) or by contacting the National Assistance Helpline on 0800 111 4000 or Textphone on 0800 111 4114. See also <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-self-isolation-factsheet/>.
- Staff can also get extra help from the RSABI seasonal workers helpline on 0300 111 4160. This service is designed specifically for seasonal agricultural workers and has translation services available. It is open Monday – Friday: 17.00 – 20.00 Sat/Sun: 10:30 – 14.00.
- RSABI is available for everyone in the agricultural industry to provide practical, emotional and financial support. A regular helpline 0300 111 4166 is available from 7am to 11pm seven days a week.
- The Scottish Government has guidance about outbreak management, including information on [proactive communications](#) and the role of public agency communication teams. Further advice can be sought from the Covid Public Health communications team – [Covid-19.policymedia@gov.scot](mailto:Covid-19.policymedia@gov.scot)



# Key messages for workers

- If you are a seasonal agricultural worker, you must self-isolate for 10 days and you must take two Covid-19 tests during this time – the first no later than day 2 after arrival and again on day 8.
- You are only allowed to self-isolate in farm accommodation. No other accommodation is permitted for the 10-day self-isolation.
- To work on farms in Scotland you have to take a Polymerase Chain Reaction, or PCR, test. These are already testing people in Scotland and are safe and easy to use. They are also more effective at finding positive cases quickly than other types of test.
- You must self-isolate if you test positive or you are told by the NHS Test and Protect team that you are a close contact of someone else who has tested positive. **NHS Test and Protect makes the decisions on who must self-isolate, no one else.**
- You must follow guidance in your day-to-day activity while in Scotland which is designed to protect public health. This means wearing a face mask, avoiding crowds, keeping a two-metre distance away from other people, washing your hands regularly and self-isolating immediately if you have symptoms, or have a positive test result.

# Sources of support

- NHS Test and Protect can provide translated services to positive cases and close contacts if needed. This can be requested in the initial call from them.
- Financial support is available to help you if you are told you have to self-isolate.
- RSABI is a charity supporting people in Scotland's agricultural sector. You can call the RSABI helpline on 0300 111 4160. This is a helpline specifically for seasonal agricultural workers and translation services are available. It is open Monday to Friday: 17.00 – 20.00 Sat/Sun: 10:30 to 14.00. You can also fill in a call back form on the RSABI website and someone will return your call - [RSABI: Help for Seasonal Workers](#)
- RSABI can help seasonal workers who are having difficulties with work, accommodation, heating, food, clothing, money, mental health and the organisation has also produced a leaflet providing support information which is available online - [RSABI: Seasonal Workers Helpline leaflet](#)
- You can get help at [www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot) or by phoning the National Assistance Helpline on 0800 111 4000 or Textphone on 0800 111 4114. You can read more at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-self-isolation-factsheet/>.

# Q&A for workers

Question	Answer
<p><b>Do I have to take this test?</b></p>	<p>Yes. If you are a seasonal agricultural worker, the law in Scotland states that you must self-isolate for 10 days and you must take two tests during these 10 days – on days 2 and 8 of self-isolation.</p> <p>The approach has been designed with the agriculture industry to minimise the risk to public health and to enable farms to stay open and the food production industry to operate during peak times. It is important that we can identify any new cases if they are imported, including among people who do not have Covid-19 symptoms but who are infectious and could spread the infection to others without realising. Identifying people who are positive and supporting them to isolate before they develop symptoms will help break the chains of transmission and prevent the entire workplace from being shut down.</p>
<p><b>What should I do if I test positive?</b></p>	<p>You and your close contacts have to self-isolate for 10 days from the date the test was taken and follow the latest government guidance. Your employer will support you in doing this and staff who are eligible will be entitled to the £500 Self-Isolation Support Grant. Visit <a href="#">Self-Isolation Support Grant</a> for further information.</p> <p>You must have had contact from NHS Test and Protect to confirm that you need to self-isolate so that you can access the Self-Isolation Support Grant.</p>
<p><b>What happens if I test negative?</b></p>	<p>You should continue to follow the preventative measures currently recommended for stopping the spread of the virus in your workplace</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To protect yourself and others, you must remember</li> <li>Face Coverings</li> <li>Avoid Crowded Places</li> <li>Clean Hands and Hard Surfaces Regularly</li> <li>Two Metres - Stay two metres away from other people</li> <li>Self-Isolate and ask your employer for a test kit if you don't already have one</li> </ul>

# Q&A for workers

## Question

## Answer

**I am worried about taking the test. Do I have to?**

Yes. The law in Scotland has changed and it is now a legal requirement to take a test on days 2 and 8 of isolation. But you should not be worried. By taking the PCR test you will help to keep other workers and the farm you work on safe. You will also get the help you need if you test positive. PCR tests are also safe and you can trust the results.

This testing is about protecting public health for you while you live and work on farms, as well as protecting wider communities and Scotland as a whole from outbreaks.

If you test positive and cannot work because you are self-isolating, you will have access to support, including financial assistance. You can also call the RSABI Seasonal workers' helpline on 0300 111 4160 if you need this support/ and for more information.

**I don't have any symptoms so I don't think I need to do this**

Some people who have coronavirus don't feel unwell or show any symptoms but they can still infect other people around them. The other people they infect can become very sick, even if they are fit and young. The tests help to find cases quickly even if you feel well and will help to stop the virus from spreading in Scotland. By taking the tests you will protect the people around you – your friends and colleagues - and save lives because you are helping to break the chains of transmission.

This is also about following the law and you need to understand that. If you do not take the test then this means you are breaking the law. You could be fined if you do this and it could affect your visa. If you return to Scotland in the future this could affect your ability to work here.

**How do I get my test results?**

If you filled your test form in and sent it from your phone, you will get your results by text or email.

**If you test positive, someone from NHS Test and Protect team will contact you.** You might not recognise the telephone number but you need to make sure you answer your phone so that you know what to do and so you can get the right support.

If you used the farmer's phone or computer or they helped you to fill in your paperwork, you need to call the helpline 48 hours after the results were sent in to receive your results. Speak to your employer about getting access to a phone if you do not have your own.

# Q&A for workers

Question	Answer
<p>How long does it take to get the results and who sees them?</p>	<p>The tests take 48 hours to process and result will be sent to you when they are ready. Your result will be sent to you via SMS and/or e-mail.</p> <p>If you test positive, Public Health Scotland will also contact your employer and this is to help to stop other people working on the farm from getting sick.</p>
<p>What happens if someone else in my accommodation or work team tests positive?</p>	<p>If you live in the same place as someone who tests positive, or if you are identified as a close contact by NHS Test and Protect, then you have to self-isolate for 10 days after the date of their test or when their symptoms began. Your employer or supervisor will help you to do this. You must self-isolate in farm accommodation – no other accommodation is permitted for this.</p>
<p>Will other people know I have tested positive. Will they be traced?</p>	<p>People will not be told that you have tested positive but everyone who tests positive will be contacted by an NHS Test and Protect person - called a Contact Tracer. This person's job is to help you remember all of the people that you might have been in close contact with so that they can contact them and prevent more people becoming infected. The Contact Tracer contacts those people and tells them they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive – they will not tell those people that you are positive unless you give permission to this being shared. <a href="#">Find more information on Contact Tracing</a>.</p>
<p>Do I still have to test on days 2 and 8 if I am a seasonal worker, but I have settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme?</p>	<p>All seasonal workers must take tests on days 2 and 8 regardless of whether they have settled or pre-settled status. There is still the possibility they could be positive for the virus and cause an outbreak.</p>
<p>Do I still have to test on days 2 and 8 if I have been fully vaccinated?</p>	<p>Yes the tests must still be taken as you could still test positive for the virus despite having been vaccinated.</p>
<p>What if I have had the virus already and have immunity?</p>	<p>Yes, it is possible to catch the virus more than once, particularly with different strains circulating so the tests must be carried out regardless.</p>

# Q&A for employers

Question	Answer
<p>What support is available for employees asked to self-isolate?</p>	<p><a href="#">Self Isolation Support Grant</a> - if you are a low income worker and/or in receipt of qualifying benefits and are asked to self-isolate you may be eligible for a £500 Self Isolation Support Grant from the Scottish Government.</p> <p>Staff can also get extra help from the RSABI seasonal workers helpline on 0300 111 4160. This service is designed specifically for people working in the agricultural industry and is open Monday to Friday: 17.00 – 20.00 and Saturday/Sunday: 10:30 – 14.00.</p> <p>RSABI has also produced a leaflet available online - <a href="#">RSABI: Seasonal Workers Helpline leaflet</a></p>
<p>How are the tests processed?</p>	<p>The PCR test is designed to identify the genetic material of coronavirus. Once the test is complete and in its sealed bag, farm staff must take all the completed kits to a dedicated collection point so they can be delivered to the testing laboratory. Results are normally available in 24 hours and the system has been designed so that staff are still in self-isolation, protecting public health and reducing disruption to farm operations.</p>
<p>What is a PCR test and what is the difference between that and an LFD test?</p>	<p>There are two main types of Covid test used to check if people currently have coronavirus. One is a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test which looks for the genetic material of the virus. This test requires a lab to find out the test result and different strains of the virus can be identified. Results are generally reported within 24 hours.</p> <p>The other type is a Lateral Flow Device test (LFD) which is used for asymptomatic testing. The swab sample can be analysed with a kit either at a test site or at home with a result identified within 30 minutes.</p>
<p>For self-isolation, does day one start from the moment workers arrive in the UK or from the moment they arrive on farm?</p>	<p>The workers must remain in self-isolation in their accommodation with their 'work bubble' for 10 days (11 nights), starting from the day after they last departed from or transited through a non-exempt country.</p>
<p>If they arrive late on a Friday evening, should they test on Saturday morning (before test collection time) or wait until Sunday?</p>	<p>The test should be taken at the earliest possible time. If it is not feasible to carry out on the Friday evening then this should be done first thing Saturday morning and sent to the laboratory for the results to be processed.</p>

# Q&A for employers

Question	Answer
If they miss testing on day two, can they test on day 3?	All effort should be made for the first test to be taken on day 2, however if for any reason a test is missed, this should be carried out as soon as possible. Regardless, the day 8 test should be taken as normal on day 8.
If someone test positive, should I test the whole farms just to be safe?	No, there is no requirement for this. Any close contacts of the positive worker should be identified and they should enter self-isolation too.
If someone test positive on day 8, do they have to self-isolate for another 10 days	Yes. The 10 day self-isolation period for a positive test will start from the date of the positive test – this is irrespective of the number of days previously spent in isolation.
If someone tests positive or is a close contact, can they work during the 10 isolation?	No, if a worker tests positive for Covid-19 or is identified as a close contact of someone who has then they must self-isolate for 10 days from the date of the positive test.
If someone tests positive, how do they/we know what variant they have?	You won't be told what variant the worker has tested positive for as there is no difference to what you have to do. The isolation period remains the same – 10 days from the date of the positive test.
How do we know if a positive result is a false positive?	The chances of this are low, however you will not be informed if your test result was a false positive. If you receive a positive test result you must isolate for 10 days from the date of the test.
When registering a test, what is our unique organisation number (UON)?*	There is no requirement to for the unique organisation number as at this point you should select the option to “register test a another way”
When registering a test, what is our 10 digit order ID?*	There is no requirement to for the 10 digit number as at this point you should select the option to “register test a another way”

# Support material

The links below take you to a video with step-by-step instructions on how to take a PCR test. The video is available in multiple languages and also as a downloadable MP4 file which can be used on farms and in settings with poor wifi connections.

## English language videos

Subtitles -

<https://youtu.be/JfHCGG3VRRY>

No subtitles -

[https://youtu.be/nw3ANc4r\\_Q](https://youtu.be/nw3ANc4r_Q)

MP4 File - <https://we.tl/t-ulvNPDR2xo>

## Translated videos

Belarus - <https://youtu.be/3sJUDfeUHu0>

Bulgarian - <https://youtu.be/NH07s2nIJIA>

Kazakh - <https://youtu.be/thRXGbsrIS8>

Nepali - <https://youtu.be/LR4S5DLSh9U>

Polish - <https://youtu.be/oOfGs08GfoY>

Romanian - <https://youtu.be/jiCphMndZxM>

Romanian (Moldova) - <https://youtu.be/BDW1QbOADB8>

Russian - <https://youtu.be/voz6DeovKZk>

Ukraine - <https://youtu.be/wxk3XN9Hh4Q>



# e-Resources

Resource	Access
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NHS Inform resources in alternative formats including:

BSL and BSL (with voiceover)  
Easy read and large print formats  
Audio

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - British Sign Language \(BSL\) | Translations \(nhsinform.scot\)](https://www.nhs.uk/informationservices/alternative-formats/coronavirus-covid-19-british-sign-language-bsl-translations)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - Easy Read | Translations \(nhsinform.scot\)](https://www.nhs.uk/informationservices/alternative-formats/coronavirus-covid-19-easy-read-translations)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - Audio | Translations \(nhsinform.scot\)](https://www.nhs.uk/informationservices/alternative-formats/coronavirus-covid-19-audio-translations)

## Covid-19 Guidance

gov.scot information on getting tested in Scotland  
gov.scot guidance on self-isolation

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): getting tested in Scotland - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/topics/health/coronavirus-covid-19/getting-tested-in-scotland)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Test and Protect - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/topics/health/coronavirus-covid-19/test-and-protect)