

COVID-Safe Support for the Red Meat Industry – Part B.

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1.0 Executive Summary

From the start of the pandemic management have taken a proactive approach to managing the threat which Covid-19 presented (particularly the red meat industry). This proactive approach which has so far resulted in zero positive cases on plant and no outbreaks. M C Herd's engagement with a consulting company named Respond Global has been extremely beneficial in ensuring its Covid-19 response has been successful to date. Respond Global's team of health experts lead by Dr. Ian Norton were able to act as an independent consultant to review, validate and provide feedback to management which was influential in formalising policies, controls and action plans necessary to be an industry leader in the fight against Covid-19.

The pressure test which was facilitated by Respond Global between M C Herd management and DHHS Victoria was considered a success by all involved and allowed M C Herd to clearly display its competence in handling a positive case / outbreak should one ever occur.

2.0 Introduction

M C Herd as part of a core project with AMPC and in conjunction with H. W. Greenham & Sons engaged with a leading health expert, Dr. Ian Norton from Respond Global. Respond Global were offering to provide consultation to management, training materials, response and action plans and other assistance to businesses considered to be high risk of a Covid outbreak.

Respond Global are well placed to assist MC Herd Pty Ltd in ensuring that their operations are COVID-Safe combined with a pressure test to assess the effectiveness of protocols, systems and processes. Respond Global were also available to support M C Herd should they experience a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 at their production or agri-business facilities.

This project focused on providing MC Herd Pty Ltd with the following:

1. Detailed review and site assessment.
2. Redesign and further develop plans and protocols as relevant to the M C Herd business including delivering an updated risk management strategy, traffic light response system for the facility with action cards, operational controls developed for the facility, assistance to implement the risk management strategy, development of a specific handbook for staff that will also be made available to Victorian Public Health.
3. In House training specifically designed for M C Herd including simulation and pressure tests.
4. Two Webinars with Q&A for senior managers and supervisors.
5. Support, access and training for the AMPC core deliverables of an LMS, Infographics and Videos (should they become available).
6. Ongoing Public Health Training as well as training and management support via the respond Global COVID-safe Client Portal for 12 months.

This PIP will deliver fit-for-purpose deliverables that will assist M C Herd in being COVID- safe. It is envisaged that this PIP will be adopted by a number of other processors across Australia, as each solution needs to be practically tailored to the individual site.

Learning from this project will also help deliver wider support to the Red Meat Industry with a number of core projects being worked up in the Core program area.

3.0 Project Objectives

The objective of this project is to support M C Herd in implementing a COVID-Safe System that meets and exceeds the expectations of the relevant regulatory departments, yet at the same time minimising the regulatory costs and disruption of business to M C Herd.

This project will ensure that the M C Herd system will meet all regulatory requirements, educate and train staff and have a well-defined process in place should an outbreak or potential outbreak occur in the future.

4.0 Methodology

Review

- Detailed review of existing documentation, plans and protocols.
- Site review and audit of current protocols and report (conducted in person with virtual support as required).

Design & Develop

Based on the review and site visit further develop:

- Risk management support focused on prevention and response.
- Prevention and response plans which included:
 - COVID-19 Traffic Light System built for each facility to provide a road map for action driven by the COVID-19 risk level as determined by the localised disease situation.
 - Detailed Implementation protocols based on the requirements of the facility.
 - Specific input on design and implementation of site protocols including:
 - Health screening protocols for staff and others as required.
 - Contact tracing approach.
 - On site infographics and communications to staff approach.
 - Site specific Handbooks for COVID. One will provide detailed information for staff on COVID- Ready requirements and a 'how to' guide. A second parallel handbook designed to inform Victoria Health Authorities risk assessment of the site's current preparation and readiness status and COVID risk management processes.

Deliver & Test

- Training webinar for management and supervisors.
- Simulation exercise development and walk-throughs' and pressure tests with Victoria Health Authorities invited to attend with lesson learned outcome report (onsite and supported virtual as required).

Project Outputs/Deliverables

- Detailed review and site assessment.
- Redesign and further develop plans and protocols as relevant to the Herds business.
- Inhouse training specifically designed for M C Herd including simulation and pressure tests.
- Two Webinars with Q&A for senior managers and supervisors.
- Support, access and training for the AMPC core deliverables of an LMS, Infographics and Videos (should they become available).
- Ongoing Public Health Training as well as training and management support via the respond Global COVID-safe Client Portal (12 months).

5.0 Project Outcomes

The team at Respond Global have worked closely with key management at M C Herd to refine our COVID-19 response and have helped develop and formalise M C Herd's 'Safety Alert System Overview' and 'Safe Operational Control Measures' documents. This has been done through a series of weekly conference calls in conjunction with H. W. Greenham & Sons to discuss issues, pain points, solutions and general updates. The process culminated in a pressure test on 17th of March which was attended by Respond Global and DHHS Victoria. The pressure test was facilitated by Respond Global and attended by key management personnel of M C Herd who presented to DHHS Victoria. This pressure test was designed to simulate a positive case / outbreak and demonstrate M C Herd's ability to manage it. M C Herd was also given the opportunity to show the processes and controls it has in place to prevent a case / outbreak on site. Respond Global then provided a report summarizing the outcomes of the day.

6.0 Discussion

Respond Global's methodology was to implement a risk-based approach when formalising policies with M C Herd to not only provide benefits internally but also demonstrate to DHHS Victoria that M C Herd was taking a proactive approach to managing their Covid response.

Respond Global assisted M C Herd in developing a risk matrix which clearly identified 5 different levels of risk based on the current disease situation that would be applied to specific risks to M C Herd. The risk matrix was presented in both a detailed and summarised format and developed with different audiences in mind. The 5 levels of disease situation for which M C Herd's risk responses are based on are;

1. Normal – no restrictions
2. Low – No community transmissions in Geelong area. Small numbers of imported cases without local spread
3. Medium – Presence of any community transmission in the local area
4. High – Hot spots identified in Geelong area and widespread community transmission
5. Extreme – Staff member positive, visitor positive to the plant or outbreak confirmed involved staff

The risk areas identified are specific to M C Herd however the broad categories which were included were arrival / departure processes, facility management, staff management and emergency response management.

The pressure test report summarised the key aims and objectives of the exercise as well as a summary of areas for improvement and action items. The action items are specific to M C Herd however the general themes were around the ability to contact trace employees & visitors on site, ensuring social distancing where possible, and ensuring controls at the entrance of the plant were practised to minimise the risk of a positive case gaining access to the site. The report acknowledges the DHHS overwhelmingly positive feedback for the internal policies developed, excellent contact training abilities and high level of compliance on site as they moved around for their assessment.

7.0 Conclusions / Recommendations

Respond Global's feedback has been extremely useful in shaping M C Herd's formal Covid response and action plan documents. Their assistance with liaising with DHHS during the pressure test and giving M C Herd the opportunity to demonstrate our competence in managing a potential outbreak was extremely beneficial. Management has taken on all feedback and formalised documents accordingly.

M C Herd would highly recommend Respond Global to other businesses not only in the red meat industry but also the wider community who face similar risks due to being considered a high-risk environment. What has been evident during the pandemic is the volume of information available which can be difficult to consume, decipher and action due to mixed messaging and different opinions. Respond Global's team of health experts helped to provide an independent and focused approach to actioning relevant information and allowing M C Herd to make informed and timely decisions to the constantly evolving threat of Covid-19.

8.0 Bibliography

N/A

9.0 Appendices

N/A