www.facebook.com/West.Virginia.Department.of.Agriculture)
witter.com/WVDeptofAg)
www.youtube.com/channel/UCKpS54lsyr6ypZyMDoB8l4Q)

West Virginia Department of Agriculture
Kent Leonhardt, Commissioner

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COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE KENT LEONHARDT RELEASES STATEMENT REGARDING COVID-19

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – West Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt released the following statement regarding the COVID-19 pandemic:

“The West Virginia Department of Agriculture is taking the necessary precautions to reduce risk of infection to all employees. Employees who are able conduct their duties at home, have been instructed as such. Those who are still required to come to work have been instructed to stay at home if they feel unwell. Employees will be granted leave by a case by case basis. We will continue to serve the public while minimizing the risk to our staff,” said Commissioner Kent Leonhardt.

“At the national level, there have been no reports of any animals becoming sick with the coronavirus. Additionally, there is no evidence animals can spread the virus. At this time, we have no indication that animals, including household pets, are at risk for infection of COVID-19. However, we urge animal caretakers to take extra precautions when handling livestock, as well as companion pets,” Leonhardt said.

For those who have contracted COVID-19 infection, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends restricting contact with pets and other animals while sick. Those infected should consider having another member of your household care for your animals until symptoms subside. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with pets and wear a facemask.

“We are working closely with federal partners, the Governor’s office and other state partners to monitor the situation. If you have questions or concerns, reach out to your local veterinarian or the WVDA for assistance. In the meantime, we encourage everyone to take extra care and precautions when it comes to handling animals, as well as yourself,” Leonhardt said.

The WVDA has received and will continue to field questions regarding companion animal owners and livestock producers and whether their animals can become infected or transit COVID-19. The WVDA is working with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for any potential response to secondary impacts related to animals. In addition, the USDA’s National

Veterinary Services Laboratory and National Animal Health Laboratory Network is gearing up for testing related to COVID-19 if a case arises with an animal in close association with an infected person.

“With the closure of schools, one of our top priorities is ensuring no child goes hungry. We stand ready to work with the Governor’s office and the National Guard on how best to distribute those commodities to those who need it most, as well as anything other emergency response capabilities we can offer. This is a time we must come together to serve the people of our state,” Leonhardt said.

The WVDA delivers approximately 15% of all the food commodities to 725 public and private schools. Additionally, the WVDA works with West Virginia’s two Feeding America Food Banks to distribute 9.8 million pounds of food annually.

At this time, the WVDA does not plan to halt any normal business activities. All regular testing, inspections, and services will remain at full capacity until further notice.

For questions, contact Crescent Gallagher at cgallagher@wvda.us (mailto:cgallagher@wvda.us) or 304-380-3922

For information regarding the COVID-19, use the following links:
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#2019-nCoV-and-animals (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#2019-nCoV-and-animals)
www.cdc.gov/healthypets/index.html (https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/index.html)
www.cdc.gov/ (https://www.cdc.gov/)
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/summary.html (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/summary.html)
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/steps-when-sick.html (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/steps-when-sick.html)
www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus (https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus)

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture protects plant, animal and human health through a variety of scientific, regulatory and consumer protection programs. The Commissioner of Agriculture is one of six statewide elected officials who sits on

the Board of Public Works.