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Taylor Gage, 402-471-1970
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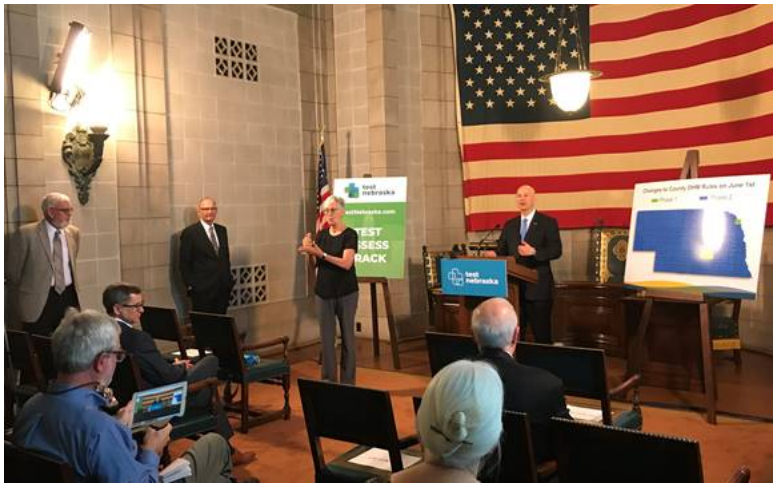
Being the Best-Prepared State for COVID-19 (https://governor.nebraska.gov/press/being-best-prepared-state-covid-19)

Media Release:

Gov. Ricketts Overviews Coronavirus Relief for Ag Producers, Highlights Nebraska Tourism Passport Program



Gov. Ricketts (podium), USDA Under Secretary Greg Ibach (standing, second from left), and Nebraska Tourism Executive Director John Ricks (standing, far left) at today's press briefing.

Video from today's briefing is available by clicking here (https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2F7u4935btgmn2h0e%2FPress%2520Conf%25205.28.2020.mp4%3Fdl%3D0&data=02%7C01%7Ccio.webr

Governor Press Release - 5.28 - SPANISH.pdf (/sites/governor.nebraska.gov/files/doc/press/Governor%20Press%20Release%20-%205.28%20-%20SPANISH.pdf)

LINCOLN – Today, Governor Pete Ricketts highlighted the great work being done by the agriculture and tourism industries to overcome the challenges created by the coronavirus pandemic. He also announced the communities where Test Nebraska will operate during the first week of June.

Greg Ibach, Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), joined the Governor for this afternoon's briefing. He gave an update on the USDA's efforts to provide assistance to Nebraskans adversely impacted by the coronavirus crisis.

Nebraska Tourism Executive Director John Ricks also attended today's press conference to talk about the 2020 Passport Program. Each year, Nebraska Tourism hosts the program to incentivize travelers to visit restaurants and attractions across the state.

Gov. Ricketts: Test Nebraska

- We continue to encourage people to take the TestNebraska.com (https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Ftestnebraska.com%2F&data=02%7C01%7Ccio.webmstr%40nebraska.gov%7C
- Test Nebraska will operate in the following communities next week:
  - Chadron, Alliance, Scottsbluff, Sidney, Broken Bow, Burwell, St. Paul, Valentine, O'Neill, Norfolk, Columbus, York, Lincoln, Fremont, Bellevue, and Omaha.
- Additional information on the specific locations of the testing sites will be posted on TestNebraska.com (https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Ftestnebraska.com%2F&data=02%7C01%7Ccio.webmstr%40nebraska.gov%7C

Greg Ibach: Agriculture

- United States Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue was recently added to the President's coronavirus task force to represent ag interests.
- Early on in the battle against the virus, President Trump declared food processors as essential businesses.
  - We're grateful to Governor Ricketts for his cooperation with the USDA and other government agencies to establish safety protocols for packing plants. The protocols have called for additional shielding, masking, and social distancing (when possible). This has helped to provide a safer environment in these workplaces.
- During the pandemic, USDA graders and inspectors have been actively ensuring our food safety. I'm pleased to report that no food processors have been delayed on account of USDA regulatory services being unavailable.
- The USDA announced the provision of Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) payments a little over a week ago.
  - CFAP payments are direct payments to farmers and ranchers.
  - There are four main "buckets" of payments for Nebraskans:
    - Traditional crop payments (soybeans, corn, wheat)
    - Livestock payments
    - Dairy payments
    - Specialty crop payments
- The USDA is also very involved in feeding programs across America.
  - In Nebraska, we're going to deliver 1 million pounds of food—valued at almost $1.3 million—to food banks for distribution to those who need assistance.

John Ricks: Tourism

- 2018 was the first year ever that visitor expenditures in Nebraska, on a percentage basis, outperformed the national average. Nebraska once again outpaced the national average in 2019.
- Tourism in Nebraska had great momentum heading into 2020, but the coronavirus has been tough for the industry.
  - In March alone, the Nebraska Tourism Commission's revenues, which come from a 1% tax on lodging, were down 59%.
  - We estimate that visitor expenditures in Nebraska dropped about $152.6 million year-over-year in March.
- The relaxation of the directed health measures will help the tourism industry a lot.
  - For instance, the Henry Doorly Zoo, Lincoln Children's Zoo, and Omaha Storm Chasers baseball games will all be open to visitors—on a limited basis—next month.
- There's a lot of pent up demand. People want to go out and take part in activities.
- Nebraska's tourism website (visitnebraska.com (https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fvisitnebraska.com%2F&data=02%7C01%7Ccio.webmstr%40nebraska.gov%7C is bucking the national trend of decreased travel interest. We've actually seen a 15% uptick in domestic web traffic from March 1st to now.
- The Nebraska Passport Program will start on June 1, 2020. It has been highly successful and is now in its tenth year.
- Nebraskans can order a Passport through nebraskapassport.com (https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnebraskapassport.com%2F&data=02%7C01%7Ccio.webmstr%40nebraska.go There's also a Passport app available.
- The Passport Program provides incentives for travelers to visit Nebraska businesses and attractions. The program had about a $24 million financial impact in 2019.
- This year, the Passport Program will be extended to October 31, 2020. Only 1 of our 70 Passport stops has had to pull out of the program.
- We're encouraging everyone to practice physical distancing as they're out and about exploring our beautiful state.

Full video of today's press briefing is available by clicking here (https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2F7u4935btgmn2h0e%2FPress%2520Conf%25205.28.