

COVID-19 and Agricultural Operations in RI

As of March 28, 2020, governor Raimondo has ordered the closure of non-essential **retail** businesses in RI. The recent Executive Order's restrictions on non-critical businesses is not a declaration that only "essential" businesses operate in RI. Paragraph 4 which details the new approach to "Certain Retail Business Closures" for non-critical businesses applies **ONLY** to retail businesses. **Thus, wholesale operations and food production — farming, fishing, aquaculture — and other non-retail operations are not covered by EO 20-14.**

Retail Operation Rules under EO 20-14

If your retail business is defined as critical (see attached list), it may continue to operate in accordance with public health guidelines and restrictions. Among the restrictions for critical retail businesses, the occupancy of the building can never exceed 20 percent of the stated fire safety capacity and all other applicable social distancing requirements must be observed.

If your retail business is not critical, then the "in store" retail portion of the business must shut down effective Monday, March 30th. Any other non-retail component of your business may continue to operate in accordance with social distancing requirements and other stated guidance (e.g., teleworking encouraged) and restrictions.

Food and Agriculture Businesses

Relating to food and agriculture, the EO makes clear that food access and distribution businesses are considered critical and may continue to operate (e.g., farmers markets), as well as retail operations that are "agricultural/seafood equipment and supply stores."

Please note that "lawn and garden supply stores" are considered non-critical and must shut down retail operations on Monday, except under these conditions: **1) For commercial customers only, you may open to them by appointment; 2) For all customers, you may allow orders to be placed ahead for curbside pickup and/or make deliveries. Again, social distancing, use of hand sanitizers, and other measures should be taken to adhere to the public health guidance. (This also applies to greenhouse operations who offer retail sales to the public.)**

Veterinarians and animal care facilities

Veterinary Clinics may be maintained and business may be conducted that is considered emergency or essential to animal care and disease prevention. In doing so the business shall observe the requirements of not allowing occupancy to exceed 20 percent of stated fire safety capacity and observe all other applicable social distancing requirements. If possible, arrangements should be made to prevent people (animal owners) from entering the clinic.

Animal feed and pet supply retail operations are critical retail businesses and may operate with restrictions in place. If a pet store is open selling supplies, they may also sell their current animal inventory but not take in any new animal inventory. The care of animals within all pet stores is essential and part of conducting necessary business and must be carried out with the requisite social distancing and maximum capacity rules in place.

Boarding kennels, municipal pounds, animal shelters and rescues may conduct business provided all social distancing and maximum capacity rules are enforced. Animal shelters and rescues should focus on placing the existing animals in their care and not intake any other animals unless that intake is considered an emergency.

Dog groomers and trainers may also continue to provide those services, with appropriate restrictions in place that limit contact and ensure social distancing consistent with the public health guidance.

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