



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

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10<sup>th</sup>. December 2020

Deputy Matt Carthy  
TD  
Dail Eireann  
Kildare  
Dublin 2

**PQ Question Ref: 39101/20:**

**To ask the Minister for Health if there have been instances whereby meat processing plants have not alerted public health if they are informed of or suspect cases of Covid-19 among the workforce; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Carthy,

The above PQ has been sent to my office for direct response to you on same.

The priority is that Public Health is aware of confirmed positive cases occurring in Meat Processing Plants (MPPs) so that appropriate action can be taken.

Serial testing of staff in MPPs occurs regularly. Covid cases identified through serial testing in MPPS are notified to Departments of Public Health.

For Meat Processing Plant workers that are identified as positive Covid cases outside of serial testing process, the Departments of Public Health are informed of all confirmed cases of COVID in their Region. Each case is contacted by the contact tracing team. The standard questionnaire for contact tracing includes a question on place of employment and the Department of Public Health is alerted.

Appropriate public health action is taken following notification of positive cases in MPPS including exclusion of the case, identification and exclusion of close contacts and an outbreak control team is convened if required.

All MPPS have received 'COVID-19 Outbreaks in Meat Factories in Ireland Outbreak Control Team Interim Guidance on COVID-19'

<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/meatfactoriesguidance/COVID-19%20Outbreaks%20in%20Meat%20Factories%20in%20Ireland%20Outbreak%20Control%20Team.pdf>

This guidance contains advice for MPPs on the management of suspect and confirmed cases in their facility.

There is good communication between Public Health and MPPs at Regional level. At national level, a National Standing Oversight Committee (NSOC) is in place for oversight of COVID-19 outbreaks in specific workplaces including meat processing facilities and construction industry across the country. This is a multi-agency group including representation from HSE Public Health, HPSC, Occupational Health, Health and Safety authority, FSAI, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and others'.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Kelleher', with a horizontal line underneath.

**DR. KEVIN KELLEHER, FFPHM, FFPHMI**  
**ASSISTANT NATIONAL DIRECTOR –PUBLIC HEALTH/CHILD HEALTH**  
**OFFICE OF CHIEF CLINICAL OFFICER**  
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