
The Peterborough Regional Farmers Network

Covid-19 Best Management Practices

The Peterborough Regional Farmers' Network (PRFN) has been working closely with Peterborough Public Health (PPH) to assure, as an essential service¹, the Peterborough Regional Farmers' Market and the Peterborough Wednesday Farmers' Market (hereafter both collectively called the Market) continues to operate in a manner that promotes and preserves public health and safety during Covid-19.

This guidebook summarizes Market operations, best practices, vendor adaptations, and appropriate personal behaviors during Covid-19. In the following pages you will find:

- Best practices for staff and market organizers
- Peterborough Public Health (PPH) recommendations and rules
- Vendor adaptations, best practices and social media supports
- Customer recommendations and expected behaviours at Market

1. Best Practices

These are challenging times and Market operations have significantly shifted to align with appropriate procedures and practices during Covid-19. In order for Market operations to continue safely and smoothly, Market staff, vendors and customers will need to all work together and adapt to the recommended policies and procedures outlined in this guidebook. This will be no easy task since Markets are usually very social and hospitable places, but during Covid-19, **it is not business as usual**. We ask all Market stakeholders to be flexible, kind, and accommodating in order to continue supporting Farmers' Markets, farmers, small businesses and a resilient local food system.

1.1 Best Practices for Staff and Market Organizers

Staff and volunteers of the Market have adapted Market operations, policies and procedures which include:

- No kids play areas
- No dining area or eating within the Market space
- Physical distancing between vendors (at least 6 feet between stalls)
- Hand washing/sanitizing stations throughout the Market
- Signage prompting measures the Market is taking during Covid-19
- Signage and arrows promoting one direction traffic through the Market
- Market staff are available for vendor and customer support
- 50 percent capacity for customers in the indoor market space as monitored by Market staff
- Staff and vendors will self-screen each week before the Market, and report their self-screening to the onsite manager. Self-screening will be done through an online platform, and the list of symptoms will be sourced from the PPH and Ontario Government websites
- Signage outlining all Covid-19 symptoms will be displayed at the Market; signage, volunteers, and Market staff will ask customers to self-screen themselves before entering the Market
- Should a staff member, vendor, or volunteer develop any Covid-19 symptoms while at the Market, they will inform the onsite Market manager or the Market administrator. The person in question will

leave the market space as soon as possible, and stay home until symptoms are gone. If needed, a Covid-19 test will be taken.

- Should a positive Covid-19 case be found amongst market staff, vendors, or recent volunteers, the Market administrator and / or the PRFN would contact PPH and seek recommendations. Recommendations from PPH would be emailed to staff, vendors, and volunteers. If advised by PPH, the Market would be temporarily closed.
- Staff will have the opportunity to include any questions or concerns related to Covid-19 in their weekly report to the market administrator. Vendors will always have the contact information of the Market administrator and the PRFN in order to voice any health and safety concerns or questions.

These adaptations were recommended and developed with the aid of PPH. PPH Health Inspectors inspect the Market regularly and work directly with Market staff and organizers to make any changes necessary to further make the Market a safe space. Market staff will review PPH guidelines and recommendations on a weekly basis. Any new or relevant health and safety information will be shared with Market staff, vendors, and volunteers in a weekly Market update. Covid-19 updates and review of policy will be done at board meetings and steering committee meetings (held monthly).

Market staff and volunteers have an especially important role to play in supporting vendors in adapting and following best practices for booth set up and customer flow management as outlined in Section 3.

1.2 Best Practices for Social Media Platforms

Social Media Platforms (Facebook and Instagram) are being used by the Market to:

- Inform the public about Covid-19 measures in place
- Inform the public about new Covid-19 measures being implemented
- Inform the public about Vendors attending the Market and facilitate access to pre-orders through contact with individual vendors
- Provide a preview of products available at the Market to make shopping efficient
- To provide a platform for Farmers to communicate what produce is available and promote alternative pick-up/ delivery options
- To support local small community businesses through online engagement

2. PPH Recommendations and Rules

PPH has been working with the Market since the Covid-19 pandemic began and has developed a set of policies and rules for Market operations during this crisis. The purpose of these policies is to:

- Promote and enforce physical distancing (maintaining 2 metres distance between people)
- Minimize common hand-touch surfaces and provide supplies to promote proper hand hygiene

More specifically, the health unit has created recommendations for Farmers' Markets to follow in order to support the above mentioned goals:

- Enforcement of "one person per family" in at a time.
- Clear signage re: "one way traffic" plans; in addition, barriers to create a better "one way" flow through the Market
- **Masks are mandatory for all vendors, customers and staff in the Saturday indoor farmers' market. If a customer has a health condition that prevents them from safely wearing a mask, a face shield**

can be worn. Alternatively, a staff member can do shopping for any customer and provide curbside pick-up. Children 2 years of age or younger are not required to wear a mask.²

- **Masks and eye protection in the form of a face shield, safety goggles, or a Plexiglas barrier are mandatory for all Market staff, vendors, and volunteers during the outdoor market season.**
- **Customers are not required to wear a mask while the market is out of doors; however Market staff will be strongly encouraging customers to wear masks if possible. This will be done through signage, verbal recommendations, and social media.**
- Having a clear “enter market here” and “exit market here” area. One entry/exit will allow for easier active monitoring and control over crowds.
- Limits on how many people can enter the indoor Market space. A 50 percent capacity will be set on the indoor market space. A staff member will keep count of the number of people inside the market space, and will inform new customers when capacity is met. An area to line-up and wait to enter the market will be roped off, with marked spaces (6 metres apart) for customers to stand.
- Have volunteers or staff on site to direct people into and out of the Market and to ensure customers do not linger and socialize within the Market.
- Public messaging to help ensure people keep shopping at the Market to shorter periods of time
- Hand sanitizer or hand-washing supplies readily available for all vendors and customers.
- Currently, no craft or artisan vendors unless they are selling essential products such as soap or herbal mixtures.
- No food samples can be displayed to customers.
- No ‘play areas’ can be set-up.
- Vendors must offer pre-packaged foods as much as possible and minimize all displays.

PPH is mandated by provincial legislation to perform food safety inspections of all farmers’ market food vendors within their jurisdiction. The purpose of these inspections is to prevent or reduce cases of food-borne illness as well as infection prevention and control during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Other important information for farmers’ markets can be found on their website.³

3. Vendor Adaptations, Best Practices and Social Media Supports

The following section outlines suggested best practices for market vendors during the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal is to ensure everyone is following the same directions to ensure the Market remains a safe and vibrant environment during these challenging times. These suggested practices were developed in conjunction with PPH and will be revised as needed to ensure all information is as up to date.

3.1 Booth Set-Up

- Place your table and tent as close to the wall behind you as possible, allowing for maximum walkway and line space in front of your booth.
- If possible, use tables and other barriers to ensure customers keep a safe distance from you and your products. For example, a double table setup (a table in front of the table you store your products on) is effective in achieving physical distancing between vendors and customers.
- Consider all sides of your booth. To prevent customers being tempted to approach your booth from the side, ensure that area is also blocked or expanded to ensure a safe distance is remained from your products.
- Ensure there is ample space for lines to form in front of your booth, with customers keeping a 6ft distance from each other. Use line delineated barriers (stanchions) provided by the Market or that you construct. See photos at the end of this document for reference⁴.
- Have hand sanitizer available for both your customers and yourself.

3.2 Customer Interactions

- Ensure all products are packaged and kept behind your table as recommended in the above section. This ensures customers will not handle your products before they have been purchased.
- Keep a 6 foot distance from customers at all stages of making a sale. This may involve having an alternative vessel for customers to put cash in that is a safe distance from you, having a pick up table to the side of your booth where you place purchased products so customers can pick it up from there, rather than you handing it to them.
- Consider alternatives to cash, such as pre orders, or portable debit/credit systems.
- When using cash, keeping cash you receive and cash you use to make change separate is beneficial. Viruses can live on surfaces for up to 72 hours. If the cash you are using to make change has been isolated for this length of time, you will be handing clean cash back to your customers, stopping potentially infected cash from circulating throughout the Market.
- Avoid lengthy conversations with your customers. Getting to know your customers and catching up is typically a staple of the Market, but at this time we are deterring any lingering at the Market. The goal is to have customers **get in and get out**, so please encourage this in your own interactions as well.
- Sanitize your hands after every customer interaction.
- Masks are required. Knowing that PPE is in short supply, use equipment that is homemade.
- If customers touch your product without purchasing it, sanitize that item, remove it from your stock, or require the customer to purchase it: you touch it, you buy it.
- If a vendor uses a debit machine, the debit machine must be sanitized after every customer use.

3.3 Vendor Example

We have provided below examples of what some vendors are already doing to incorporate measures into their booths to make customers comfortable with buying their food and ask that all vendors consider which measures are appropriate for their stall(s):

These measures include:

- Doubling up on tables to create buffer between shoppers and product. (Product all on second table towards back of booth)
- Plexiglass barrier hanging from tent separating shoppers and product
- Hand sanitizer available
- Receiving online payments (although still accepting cash) most pre-orders occurring on the Thursday/Friday before Market
- Shoppers leave cash in designated area on buffer table when paying, when cash from three or so shoppers accumulates, puts on glove and places in till
- Making change: has open cash drawer, customers can make own change if they want to.
- Has hot food available, heating with butane stove. Thermometer available for temps checks to confirm food safety compliance.

3.4 Tips for Vendors: Instagram

Tag the Market(s) in your Instagram posts to prompt a re-share by the Market account. Post anticipated Market offerings prior to Market day (Wednesday or Thursday if possible for the Saturday Market, and Sunday or Monday for the Wednesday Market) to prompt pre-orders by public.

- This could be a photo
- a menu
- a featured item
- details on how to pre-order from you
- communication of alternate payment methods
- communication on your best practices in response to Covid-19

If Instagram is not accessible to you, you may e-mail Photos with a brief description to info@ptboregionalfarmersmarket.com and they may be shared on the Market account.

3.5 Tips for Vendors: Facebook

Tag the Market in your Facebook posts to prompt a re-share by the Market account. Post anticipated market offerings prior to market day (Wednesday or Thursday if possible for the Saturday Market, and Sunday or Monday for the Wednesday Market) to prompt pre-orders by public.

- This could be a photo
- a menu
- a featured item
- details on how to pre-order from you
- communication of alternate payment methods
- communication on your best practices in response to Covid-19

3.6 Tips for Vendors when social media access is limited or unavailable

If social media is not accessible to you, you may e-mail photos with a brief description to info@ptboregionalfarmersmarket.com and they may be shared on the Market account.

4. Customer recommendations and expected behaviours at Market

Since it is not business as usual at the Market, customers also have to adapt their behaviours. Signage has been created for the market to prompt these behaviours and vendors can help education their customers on these new expectations, which include:

- Only sending one family member if possible to do shopping
- Visit the Market website and connect via email or online store to preorder and prepay for products so that they can be easily picked up at market
- Read and follow all market signs that communicate pedestrian traffic flows and other Covid-19 measures
- Maintain physical distancing from other vendors and customers (2 meters)
- Bring ready to eat food home and **do not** eat food at the Market
- **Wear a mask while inside the indoor Market space**
- **If adult has an exemption they must either wear a face shield instead of a mask or they must allow Market staff to perform their shopping while they wait outside of the Market space.**
- **Masks are not mandated under PPH at the outdoor market – however PPH strongly encourages customers to wear masks while at the market.**
- Children under 2 can enter the Market without a mask or face shield.
- Try to limit the amount of time spent in the market space

We understand this is an enormous change from business as usual at the Market, which is usually such a friendly, inviting and socializing place for our community. We need to remain diligent with these measures now so that we can return to all the fun and enjoyment the Market brings in the the near future. We appreciate everyone's accommodation and resilience to our current reality and believe so strongly that as a community we can make it through this.

Be Safe!

Endnotes:

¹ The province of Ontario has deemed Farmers' Markets essential services.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/list-essential-workplaces>

<https://mailchi.mp/farmersmarketsontario.com/covid-19-update-6>

² <https://www.ontario.ca/page/face-coverings-and-face-masks>

³ <https://www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca/your-health/food-water-safety/food-safety/farmers-market-food-safety-inspections/>

⁴ Photo of Stanchion

