# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Update on Outbreaks and Incident at meat and food processing sites in Wales** |
| **DATE** | **3 July 2020** |
| **BY** | **Vaughan Gething MS, Minister for Health and Social Services** |

I am providing an update on the two outbreaks, and one incident, of Covid-19 at meat and food processing sites in Wales. These are being actively managed, in line with the Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales to control and prevent the spread of the virus.

While there have been some increases in cases as a result of the outbreaks and incident, there is no evidence of any widespread transmission within the respective wider communities. There is therefore no need to impose a local lockdown as happened in Leicester this week. We will of course continue to review the position here in Wales.  
  
Consultants in Communicable Disease Control, from Public Health Wales, are chairs of the Outbreak Control Teams and the Incident Management Team. The three teams work in partnership with the employers, local authorities, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the Food Standards Agency (FSA), and Health Boards.

At the 2 Sisters plant in Llangefni, in Anglesey: there are currently 217 confirmed cases comprised of staff members and their contacts. Testing has been extensive and 305 negative results have been confirmed to date. Subject to ongoing progress to the satisfaction of the multi agencies involved, training will start at the plant on Friday 3rd July with the intention of re-commencing operations on Sunday 5th July. The company has stated that staff members will not work until their status has been confirmed as negative.

In relation to the Rowan Foods plant in Wrexham, there are now 283 confirmed cases and to date 909 people have tested negative. The recent increase in confirmed cases are results coming through from the mass testing of the workforce that has been undertaken, and is not new spread of infection. The results are what we would expect to see when a focused and robust testing regime is put in place. There continues to be no evidence that the infection is factory-based and the factory remains operational with suitable safeguards in place. A 2 day long HSE site visit took place last week.

There continues to be an incident centred on the Kepak Food Group plant in Merthyr Tydfil. 134 cases have been now been confirmed by the laboratory further to testing. These cases have occurred since April and of the 105 new cases, over fifty percent of these cases are no longer likely to be infectious. There is no evidence to suggest any ongoing transmission in the plant.

At the end of last week, I issued new guidance for meat processing and food production plants about preventing and managing outbreaks of coronavirus. The guidance was developed on an expedited basis and I would thank the stakeholders who inputted into its production, it covers:

* Procedures to manage suspected cases, including information about the NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect service.
* Workplace risk assessment.
* Communications with employees.
* Shared accommodation and transport to site.
* Entry to site and physical distancing onsite, including in communal areas
* Food hygiene.

The NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect service has been a key component of our response to help keep Wales safe. This has included the willingness to share resource in mutual aid and support communities across Wales.

On Monday 29th June, I met again with employers and unions. We identified the following issues for further action:

* The need to re-inforce the need to socially distance both at the work place and travelling to and from work.
* Addressing any language barriers in communicating with staff.
* Being aware of living arrangements which can increase the risks of transmission and not allow for effective self-isolation.

I am prepared to exercise legal powers to close facilities that pose a public health risk from Covid-19 if that is necessary. To date the advice I have received is that if the measures implemented to date are adhered to then further interventions are not justified. This is a dynamic situation and I will continue to review what measures may be required in the future.

I will of course keep members updated.