



**Quad Cities COVID-19 Coalition  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 29, 2020

**Current COVID-19 case count**

**Scott County** – 2 new cases for a total of 222

**Rock Island County** – 24 new cases for a total of 426. 23 patients are in the hospital

**Tyson plant**

The Tyson Foods meatpacking plant in Joslin, Ill., has been identified as having an outbreak of COVID-19 in Rock Island County.

As of the Wednesday morning, April 29, the Rock Island County Health Department knew of 92 cases and two deaths of Rock Island County residents who work at Tyson. Employees of Tyson also live in other Illinois counties and in counties in Iowa. It is the responsibility of the employee's home county to follow up on cases.

"The meatpacking industry is inherently prone to COVID-19 cases because employees work in close proximity to each other," said Nita Ludwig, administrator of the Rock Island County Health Department. "Our team has been working with Tyson managers for several weeks to work on mitigation efforts to reduce the number of cases, and the Tyson team has been taking our advice to heart."

Tyson has put up plastic glass barriers between workers and has staggered shifts and lunch schedules to reduce the number of employees congregating together, Ludwig said. A team from the health department visited the plant earlier this month. However, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is responsible for inspecting all meatpacking plants for food safety and operations.

RICHD's infectious disease team has been working with each patient and family to help minimize the number on infections outside of the plant through a process called contact tracing, which is the basis of public health infection control. Public health staff ask patients a series of questions to help them recall everyone with whom they have had close contact during the timeframe while they may have been infectious. For COVID-19, the contagion period is 2-14 days after exposure.

Other factors are in play with Rock Island County having 426 current cases.

"Rock Island County's larger number also could be partially due to the social determinants of health and our demographics in Rock Island County. For more than 15 years, we have seen poorer health outcomes in our community health assessment for Rock Island County than we do in Scott County," Ludwig said. "The data are showing that patients who have co-morbidities have a greater chance of serious COVID-19 infection or dying from the disease."

## **More information and video**

- [www.TogetherQC.com](http://www.TogetherQC.com)
- Flattening the Curve Resource: <https://covid19.healthdata.org/united-states-of-america>
- Together Quad Cities: Keep Staying Home video: [https://youtu.be/\\_GG0hRvJ0So](https://youtu.be/_GG0hRvJ0So)
- IDPH COVID-19 PSA (television): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FvsF02uCM-M&feature=youtu.be>
- IDPH COVID-19 PSA (radio): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xznWLKeZO3E&feature=youtu.be>

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