



**Quad Cities COVID-19 Coalition  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 15, 2020**

**Current COVID-19 case count**

**Scott County** – Total of 2,541

Total deaths in Scott County: 26

**Rock Island County** – 10 new cases since Monday; total of 2,715

Currently in hospital: 14

Total deaths in Rock Island County: 74

**Today's call**

A video recording of today's media briefing can be found at

<https://www.scottcountyiowa.com/health/covid19/news>

**Reducing risk of COVID-19 exposure**

Remarks from Edward Rivers, director, Scott County Health Department

The Iowa Department of Public Health has reported another COVID-19 death of a Scott County resident. We send out deepest sympathies to the family of this individual. As a community, we must use all of the tools at our disposal to slow the spread of this virus.

With six months experience in COVID-19 contact tracing and providing guidance to individuals who are positive or contacts to a positive case, we have found that portions of the guidance can use some emphasis and clarification.

Public health recommends that individuals who are positive for COVID-19 self-isolate for a period of at least 10 days. Self-isolation means separating someone who has COVID-19 (symptoms or no symptoms) to prevent the virus from being spread to others.

This means:

- Staying away from others inside of your home - not sharing meals or being in shared living spaces. If you don't stay away, you are continuing to expose the people in your household over and over; more exposure means more chances to get them sick.
- We are asking individuals to self-isolate 100% of the 10 day period, not just for a majority of any day.
- Self-isolation is very important, especially in protecting those with whom you live. The virus spreads extremely easily among household members. The likelihood of

contracting COVID-19 is nearly 10x higher if you live in the same household as a positive case.

Public health recommends that individuals who are close contacts of a positive case of COVID-19 quarantine for a period of 14 days to prevent spreading the virus. You can transmit the virus before you feel symptoms should you develop the illness.

Again, this means:

- Staying away from others inside of your home – not sharing meals or being in shared living spaces, for the entirety of the 14 day period.
- Not attending any group gatherings or activities.

When individuals who are positive or are close contacts don't heed public health guidance and stay home during their self-isolation or quarantine periods, others catch the virus. It could be spread to someone with an underlying condition, a healthcare worker who is working on the front lines, or to a whole football team.

Isolation and quarantine are difficult and frustrating. Your best chance to avoid them is by being cautious. Don't go to places or events where you can't maintain six feet between yourself and others. Wear a mask whenever you're out. Wash your hands often, and avoid touching your face, especially your mouth and eyes. Also, if you begin to feel any sort of symptoms — a runny nose, cough, or sore throat — stay home.

This virus is now a part of our everyday lives. Do what you can to stop the spread by following self-isolation or self-quarantine recommendations.

### **Tyson's efforts curtailed outbreak**

Remarks from Nita Ludwig, administrator, Rock Island County Health Department

Back in March and April, we investigated many COVID-19 cases connected to the Tyson meatpacking plant in Joslin. In those early days, most of the cases in the county were either Tyson workers or close contacts of Tyson workers. This was not a surprising trend because meatpacking plants across the nation had been hotspots early in the pandemic.

Since those early days, we have been in almost daily contact with leaders at the Joslin plant. In April, Rock Island County Health officials and an infectious disease physician who is part of our volunteer Medical Reserve Corps visited the plant and met with plant manager Barbara Salter. We saw that Tyson had instituted aggressive and innovative infection control efforts. By the end of May, we saw hardly any new cases. Throughout the summer, the case count grew by only a handful.

As of today, 166 Tyson employees have tested positive. Tyson's quick action drastically slowed — and practically halted — the spread of COVID-19 in the facility.

Tyson employees 2,700 people who speak 27 different languages. Leaders at the plant implemented a host of protective measures that have made the case count at Tyson flatten for months, including:

- Prior to entering the plant, every team member is provided a face mask and screened for symptoms. Masks are required to be worn at all times in the facility.
- Team members walk through a scanner that takes their temperature before going into the plant.
- The facility adjusted shift times so that employees don't cross and implemented a one-way-in and one-way-out traffic pattern.
- They installed barriers at all workstations, office desks, and at tables in cafeterias.
- In addition to masks, all team members wear a face shield on their hard hats at all times.
- Team members have been assigned as social distance monitors throughout the facility.
- Team members continually sanitize cafeterias, offices, hallways, locker rooms, handrails, lockers, etc. throughout the day.
- They installed "no touch" drinking stations, hand sanitizers, soap dispensers, and paper towel dispensers.
- Designated workers have been trained to translate for and educate workers in their own language.
- Testing is available onsite who anyone who is symptomatic or a close contact of a suspected or confirmed case and soon will have weekly test sampling to stay ahead of any future outbreaks.

The health department supplied Tyson with signs in many languages to help get across the importance of wearing masks, social distancing and hand washing. We also started an advertising campaign on Rock Island County buses that share these messages in 5 languages: English, Spanish, French, Swahili and Hakha Chin.

Early in the pandemic, we feared that the Tyson plant become one of the COVID-19 hotspots in the nation — like meatpacking plants had become in South Dakota and Iowa — and that thousands of people in the Quad-City region would get sick. That hasn't happened.

We have 2,715 cases in Rock Island County, and only 166 of them are Tyson employees. We have 74 deaths in Rock Island County, but only two of them were Tyson employees.

Tyson and an outbreak at the East Moline Correctional Center account for about 30 percent of cases in Rock Island County. That means that 70 percent of people who have gotten sick because they were exposed somewhere else in the community.

Keeping yourself as safe possible is in your hands. Please wear a mask outside your home. Please keep 6 feet between you and others. Please clean frequently touched services. And

please wash your hands. Tyson's success shows us that those four efforts can significantly slow the rate of infection in our community.

### **Testing sites**

Individuals experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath, headache, new loss of smell or taste, nausea or diarrhea) should consider options for COVID-19 testing:

- Contact their health care provider
- Find a community-based testing option:
  - Scott County: visit [www.TestIowa.com](http://www.TestIowa.com) to sign-up for testing through the Scott County TestIowa site (now extended additional weeks)
  - Rock Island County: Drive-up site Sept. 17-20 at the QCCA Expo Center, 2621 4th Ave., Rock Island (Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) **Any Illinois resident can be tested — regardless of symptoms.**
- Access testing through local health clinics, including: Genesis Health System Convenient Cares, UnityPoint Health – Trinity Express Cares, and Community Health Care Inc.

### **More information**

- [www.TogetherQC.com](http://www.TogetherQC.com)
- [coronavirus.iowa.gov](http://coronavirus.iowa.gov)
- <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19>
- <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/regionmetrics?regionID=2>
- <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/countymetrics?county=Rock%20Island>
- <https://www2.illinois.gov/idoc/facilities/Pages/Covid19Response.aspx>
- <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/long-term-care-facility-outbreaks-covid-19>

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