

OSU Extension Cancels In-Person Programming Through January 15, 2021

(as of December 4, 2020)

To our stakeholders:

In an effort to keep our employees, volunteers, and communities safe, effective December 7, 2020, all OSU Extension-hosted meetings and events will be canceled, postponed, or held virtually until January 15, 2021. This includes 4-H club meetings and events, as well as Master Gardener Volunteer meetings and events.

This also means that OSU Extension professionals are not able to attend in-person meetings or events with our community partners; they may only attend virtually. Examples include, but are not limited to, fair board meetings, livestock weigh-ins, and year-end celebrations.

Ohio State University Extension is part of a land-grant academic institution. As such, we follow science and model what the [CDC \(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention\)](#), the [Ohio Department of Health](#), and [other experts](#) stress is important in addressing this virus.

As I am sure you are all well aware, the number of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths are all increasing for Ohio and across the nation. We must continue to be vigilant and put the safety of our employees and that of our clientele first. It is the belief of the university, our college, and our organization that if we can help reduce the load by preventing or slowing down the spread of the virus, we should. **Our rationale and assumptions include:**

- The number of cases, hospitalizations and death in Ohio are on the rise, and are NOT likely to reverse in the next three to four weeks.
- The increased gatherings over Thanksgiving and anticipated gatherings likely to occur between now and the new year will only contribute to this pattern of increase.
- Experts are indicating that hospital capacity in Ohio is already stressed by new COVID-19 cases and will soon have limited availability for non-COVID patients. This demand does not reflect the anticipated increases from recent Thanksgiving gatherings.
- We must do our part to reduce the spread of infection to help keep hospitals and the health care workforce from being overwhelmed.
- We, as part of an academic institution, need to follow science and model what the CDC and other health experts stress is important in addressing this virus.

We also have updated our current office staffing guidelines; those are based on the rating assigned to each county by the Ohio Public Health Advisory System. Please see the summary on the next page for more information.



THE FOLLOWING GUIDANCE WILL BE IMPLEMENTED, EFFECTIVE DECEMBER 7, 2020 AND RUN THROUGH JANUARY 15, 2021:

County Office Staffing

The Ohio Public Health Advisory System indicates the status of counties based on a color-coded system. If a county is purple or approaching purple, OSU Extension offices will be closed and employees will be working virtually. If a county is red, OSU Extension offices will be staffed by appointment only. You will need to call in advance to schedule a time to go to the office.

If a county is orange or yellow, the OSU Extension office can remain open to the public, with safety protocols in place. There will be a limited number of employees in the office at any one time. If a county's status changes to red or purple, the staffing guidelines listed above will apply immediately.

Please note that there may be additional guidelines from county health departments. If a county has issued a local health advisory, we expect the Extension professionals in that county to follow the most restrictive guidance (Ohio State or local).

Our Request for your Continued Understanding

We ask for your continued support in encouraging a respectful understanding that our OSU Extension county professionals are required to follow this guidance as part of the university. We all share the disappointment and sense of loss that comes with not being able to connect in-person.

We will continue to monitor the situation and look forward to being able to return to in-person programming when the situation has shown sustained improvement. Our collective actions will have much influence on the timing of when that might occur, given the spread of the virus and our need to work together to limit infection and spread.

We will continue to effectively and efficiently serve our clientele via phone, email, and virtual programming. While distanced programming is not our first choice for serving you, it is currently the safest choice.

Thank you for your continued support of OSU Extension, and for supporting our approach to our work in the way that contributes to the safety and well-being of our employees, volunteers, and communities during the COVID-19 crisis.

Sincerely,

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