Frequently Asked Questions
(as of 8/11/20)

GEBBERS FARMS

1. **How many guest workers are employed at Gebbers Farms?**
   As one of the top apple and cherry farmers in the state, Gebbers Farms employs roughly 4,500 people, of which about half are domestic workers and half guest workers, although these numbers vary depending on the time of year. For example, currently, we employ 2,500 guest workers.

2. **Why does Gebbers Farms hire guest workers?**
   Guest workers fill in when we don’t have enough domestic workers. Every year, the farm, via wafla, advertises open positions and solicits domestic applicants. We hire as many domestic employees as we can. When there are vacancies, we apply to the U.S. Department of Labor to hire guest workers.

GUEST WORKERS and HOUSING

3. **In any given year, do H2A workers always stay for their full contract period?**
   Most guest workers complete their full contract period, which varies depending on their visa. However, like any job, employees may choose to leave our employment at any time. In any given year, we fill these vacancies as needed.

4. **Is your guest worker housing approved?**
   The Washington State Department of Health inspects and licenses all guest worker housing annually before employees arrive. All Gebbers Farms’ guest worker housing was inspected and licensed in February 2020 prior to the arrival of new seasonal guest workers.

5. **Are bunkbeds allowed in the guest worker housing?**
   The Washington State Department of Health licenses the use of bunk beds in guest worker housing. They were allowed before the pandemic, and under the Washington State Emergency Rules, effective May 28, 2020, are still allowed but must be placed six feet apart. In our dwellings that have bunk beds, we have set them six feet apart per the requirements.

We want to thank the Washington Tree Fruit Association, wafla and the Washington Farm Bureau for donating masks, hand sanitizer and sanitizer spray bottles to farmworkers and farmers around the state.
6. **What is Gebbers Farms doing to minimize the risk of coronavirus exposure among its guest workers?**
   Our COVID-19 protocols include preventive measures in every aspect of housing, transportation and working. Please refer to our Covid-19 protocols page.

7. **Do employees have to pay for COVID-19 tests?**
   At the beginning of the pandemic, tests were in low supply, and the cost depended on the testing site. There were many options, including private doctors, the hospital, and public clinics. Some of these were free and some charged. Currently, the tests are free at public testing sites. Gebbers Farms provides free transportation to and from the test sites, and we strongly encourage employees to be tested.

8. **Do employees have to pay for food when they are in quarantine or isolation (Quarantine 2)?**
   No. The company provides food, medicines and other personal items upon request and at no cost to the employees. Employees request the foods of their choice, and we have a designated driver and vehicle that goes to town to pick up and deliver these items for the employees at no cost to the employee. Drinking water is readily available.

9. **Do workers in quarantine or isolation (Quarantine 2) receive medical care?**
   Trained personnel from an emergency medical service are conducting periodic wellness checks at the dwellings, and a company Safety Officer visits the employees regularly. Employees may request and be taken to see a doctor at any time. The farm has a designated vehicle and driver available to take employees to the clinic or hospital.

10. **Are employees paid while they must quarantine?**
    In addition to receiving their accrued sick leave pay, employees can also apply for benefits under the state Paid Family Medical Leave (PFML) program. We can help employees apply and file for PFML benefits.

**COVID-19**

11. **How did Gebbers Farms prepare for COVID-19?**
    In February, when very little was known about how the virus would affect the country, we proactively worked with the local county health department to learn what we could do to protect workers in case the virus came to our town. We began distributing educational materials to employees as early as the end of February. The educational materials were included with employees’ paychecks and posted on communal poster boards throughout the company locations.

12. **What did Gebbers Farms do after the Washington State Emergency Rules were issued?**
    Immediately after the Emergency Rule was published, we hired an infectious disease specialist to review our COVID-19 protocols. These included grouping employees into cohorts, separating cohorts, providing employees personal protective equipment (PPE), daily temperature checks, monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms, and providing multi-lingual public health educational materials as we had already been doing.
13. What does the CDC suggest that people who have COVID-19 symptoms do?
Symptomatic employees follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations to quarantine, rest and self-monitor and seek medical treatment if warning signs appear. Gebbers Farms provides employees with educational materials about coronavirus symptoms and warning signs, and it has a designated vehicle and driver available to take employees to the clinic or hospital at any time.

14. What happens when a guest worker is sick or shows COVID-19 symptoms?
In accordance with state and federal public health recommendations, guest workers who display COVID-19 symptoms are quarantined in designated housing away from the regular housing. For those who wish to be tested, the farm provides free transportation to and from the test site. Company Safety Officers check on employees regularly, conduct interviews using a standard questionnaire about symptoms, and ask employees if they would like to see a doctor. Safety Officers are also provided thermometers to take temperatures and are equipped with finger oxygen meters. We include a finger oxygen meter in each quarantine room and show safety officers and employees how to use it.

Employees in quarantine must still follow CDC guidelines, including wearing a mask and social distancing. Employees bring all of their belongings with them, including their phones so they can keep in touch with friends and family. When an employee leaves quarantine, their room is thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

15. What happens if an employee in quarantine receives a confirmed positive COVID-19 test?
An employee that is confirmed positive for the virus is move to another housing facility called isolation in the state’s Emergency Rule, although it is just another quarantine area. We’ll call it Quarantine 2. Safety Officers also visit these employees regulatory, and they also must still follow CDC guidelines, including wearing a mask and social distancing. They bring all of their belongings with them, including their phones so they can keep in touch with friends and family. When an employee leaves quarantine and moves to isolation (Quarantine 2), their room is thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

16. What percent of Gebbers Farms guest workers have tested positive for COVID-19?
Since March 2020, when the pandemic began in Washington state, less than 3% of our guest workers have reported to us that they tested positive.

17. What do Gebbers Farms Safety Officers do?
In compliance with the Washington State Temporary Housing Emergency Rule, company Safety Officers check on employees regularly, conduct interviews using a standard questionnaire about symptoms, and ask employees if they would like to see a doctor. These Safety Officers are also provided thermometers, finger oxygen meters, and instructions on how to them.

18. Why do some employees still get sick, despite efforts to prevent COVID-19 at work?
As is the case around the country, despite best efforts, people get sick. As an employer, we are committed to doing everything we can to minimize the risk, but we do not and cannot control what workers do in their own time. We use public health messages to educate workers on how to minimize the risk of transmission at work, in company-provided housing, and while away from work. We repeatedly encourage workers to wear masks, practice good hand hygiene, and social distance at all times, not just while at work or at home.
Health professionals and scientists change their recommendations as their understanding of the virus has progressed. We will continue to update our protocols based on the latest public health recommendations.

19. Why did L&I conduct inspections at Gebbers Farms?
When the May 28 state Emergency Rule passed, officials recognized that it is not a one-size-fits-all, and no one plan could fit all business models. So, the state allowed businesses to apply for variances, which the farm did.

Immediately after the Emergency Rule passed, the company applied for a variance based on its COVID-19 protocols that were developed in consultation with an infectious disease specialist. While waiting for a response to the variance applications, Gebbers Farms received a notice that it was being inspected. Since then, we have been working closely with state Labor & Industries (L&I) to identify and implement any necessary changes to our protocols.

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