
The Peterborough Regional Farmers Network

Covid-19 Best Management Practices



The Peterborough Regional Farmers' Network (PRFN) has been working closely with Peterborough Public Health (PPH) to assure, as an essential service¹, the Peterborough Regional Farmers' Market (the Market) continues to operate in a manner that promotes and preserves public health and safety during Covid-19.

This guidebook summarizes Market's operations, best practices, vendor adaptations, and appropriate personal behaviors during Covid-19. In the following pages you will find:

- Best practices for staff and market organizers.
- PPH recommendations and rules.
- Vendor adaptations, best practices and social media supports.
- Customer recommendations and expected behaviours at Market.

1. Best Practices

These are challenging times and Market operations have significantly shifted to align with appropriate procedures and practices during Covid-19. In order for Market operations to continue safely and smoothly, Market staff, vendors and customers will need to all work together and adapt to the recommended policies and procedures outlined in this guidebook. This will be no easy task since Markets are usually very social and hospitable places, but during Covid-19, it is not business as usual. We ask all Market stakeholders to be flexible, kind, and accommodating in order to continue supporting Farmers' Markets, farmers, small businesses and a resilient local food system.

1.1 Best Practices for Staff and Market Organizers

Staff and volunteers of the Market have adapted Market operations, policies and procedures which include:

- No seating area or kids play areas.
- Physical distancing between vendors (at least 10 feet between stalls).
- Hand washing/sanitizing stations throughout the Market.
- Signage prompting measures the Market is taking during Covid-19.
- Signage and arrows promoting one direction traffic through the Market.
- Hosting the Markets outside in the open air and with less common hand touch services.
- Market staff are wearing orange vests and are highly visible for vendors and customer support.

These adaptations were developed with PPH and based on the recommendations in Section 2. PPH Health Inspectors inspect the Market weekly and work directly with Market staff and organizers to make any changes necessary to further make the Market a safe space.

Market staff and volunteers have an especially important role to play in supporting vendors in adapting and following best practices for booth set up and customer flow management as outlined in Section 3.

1.2 Best Practices for Social Media Platforms

Social Media Platforms (Facebook and Instagram) are being used by the Market to:

- Inform the public about Covid-19 measures in place.
- Inform the public about new Covid-19 measures being implemented.
- Inform the public about Vendors attending the Market and facilitate access to pre-orders through contact with individual vendors.
- Provide a preview of products available at the Market to make shopping efficient.
- To provide a platform for Farmers to communicate what produce is available and promote alternative pick-up/ delivery options.
- To support local small community businesses through online engagement.

2. PPH Recommendations and Rules

PPH has been working with the Market since the Covid-19 pandemic began and has developed a set of policies and rules for Market operations during this crisis. The purpose of these policies is to:

- Promote and enforce physical distancing (maintaining that 2 metres distance between people), and
- Minimize common hand-touch surfaces and provide supplies to promote proper hand hygiene."

More specifically, the health unit has created recommendations for Farmers' Markets to follow in order to support the above mentioned goals:

- Enforcement of "one person per family" in at a time.
- Clear signage re: "one way traffic" plans. The clearer the better. Barriers to create a better "one way" flow through the Market.
- Having a clear "enter market here" and "exit market here" area. One entry/exit will allow for easier active monitoring and control over crowds.
- Like most grocery stores are doing now - limits need be set as to how many people can enter the Market area. Coordinators need to get in the practice of crowd-limiting techniques before it becomes an issue.
- Have volunteers or staff present to direct people into and out of the Market and to ensure customers do not hang around and socialize within.
- Organizers must have options available for guests to "order ahead" and pick-up on-site only.
- Public messaging to help ensure people keep shopping at the Market to shorter periods of time (i.e. aren't browsing, chatting, etc. – let's "get in and get out").
- Have a plan to control line-ups for individuals waiting to get into the Market. This should include physical distancing in line and encouraging "no smoking".
- Hand sanitizer or hand-washing supplies must be readily available for all vendors and customers.
- Only essential items, such as food, shall be sold or offered for sale.
- No food samples can be distributed to customers.
- No seating areas or 'play areas' can be set-up.
- Vendors must offer pre-packaged foods as much as possible and minimize all displays.

PPH regularly inspects farmers' markets to assess if they are exempt from the Food Premise Regulation (FPR). Details of this exemption and other important information for farmers' markets can be found on the PPH website.² During the Covid-19 pandemic, PPH has been inspecting our Market every week.

3. Vendor Adaptations, Best Practices and Social Media Supports

The following Section outlines suggested best practices for market vendors during the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal is to ensure everyone is following the same directions to ensure the Market remains a safe and vibrant environment during these challenging times. These suggested practices were developed in conjunction with PPH and will be revised as needed to ensure all information is as up to date. Whether or not the Market stays open for the summer season depends on the effectiveness of the measures we take.

3.1 Booth Set-Up

- Place your table and tent as close to the wall behind you as possible, allowing for maximum walkway and line space in front of your booth.
- Use tables and other barriers to ensure customers keep a safe distance from you and your products. For example, a double table setup (a table in front of the table you store your products on) is effective in achieving physical distancing between vendors and customers.
- Consider all sides of your booth. To prevent customers being tempted to approach your booth from the side, ensure that area is also blocked or expanded to ensure a safe distance is remained from your products.
- Ensure there is ample space for lines to form in front of your booth, with customers keeping a 6ft distance from each other. Use line delineated barriers (Stanchions) provided by the Market or that you construct. See photos at the end of this document for reference³.
- Have hand sanitizer available for both your customers and yourself.

3.2 Customer Interactions

- Ensure all products are packaged and kept behind your table as recommended in the above section. This ensures customers will not handle your products before they have been purchased.
- Keep a 6 foot distance from customers at all stages of making a sale. This may involve having an alternative vessel for customers to put cash in that is a safe distance from you, having a pick up table to the side of your booth where you place purchased products so customers can pick it up from there, rather than you handing it to them.
- Consider alternatives to cash, such as pre orders, or portable debit/credit systems.
- When using cash, keeping cash you receive and cash you use to make change separate is beneficial. Viruses can live on surfaces for up to 72 hours. If the cash you are using to make change has been isolated for this length of time, you will be handing clean cash back to your customers, stopping potentially infected cash from circulating throughout the Market.
- Avoid lengthy conversations with your customers. Getting to know your customers and catching up is typically a staple of the Market, but at this time we are deterring any lingering at the Market. The goal is to have customers get in and get out, so please encourage this in your own interactions as well.
- Sanitize your hands after every customer interaction.
- Masks are recommended. Knowing that PPE is in short supply, use equipment that is homemade.
- If customers touch your product without purchasing it, sanitize that item, remove it from your stock, or require the customer to purchase it: you touch it, you buy it.

3.3 Vendor Example

We have provided below examples of what some vendors are already doing to incorporate measures into their booths to make customers comfortable with buying their food and ask that all vendors consider which measures are appropriate for their stall(s):

These measures include:

- Doubling up on tables to create buffer between shoppers and product. (Product all on second table towards back of booth).
- Plexiglass barrier hanging from tent separating shoppers and product.
- Hand sanitizer available.
- Receiving online payments (although still accepting cash) most pre-orders occurring on the Thursday/Friday before Market.
- Shoppers leave cash in designated area on buffer table when paying, when cash from three or so shoppers accumulates, puts on glove and places in till.
- Making change: has open cash drawer, customers can make own change if they want to.
- Has hot food available, heating with butane stove. Thermometer available for temps checks to confirm food safety compliance.

3.4 Tips for Vendors: Instagram

Tag the Market (@PTBORFM) in your Instagram posts to prompt a re-share by the Market account. Post anticipated Market offerings prior to Market day (Wednesday or Thursday if possible) to prompt pre-orders by public.

- This could be a photo.
- A menu.
- A featured item.
- Details on how to pre-order from you.
- Communication of alternate payment methods.
- Communication on your best practices in response to Covid-19.

If Instagram is not accessible to you, you may e-mail Photos with a brief description to info@ptboregionalfarmersmarket.com and they may be shared on the Market account.

3.5 Tips for Vendors: Facebook

Tag the Market (@Peterborough Regional Farmers' Market) in your Facebook posts to prompt a re-share by the Market account. Post anticipated market offerings prior to market day (Wednesday or Thursday if possible) to prompt pre-orders by public.

- This could be a photo.
- A menu.
- A featured item.
- Details on how to pre-order from you.
- Communication of alternate payment methods.
- Communication on your best practices in response to Covid-19.

3.6 Tips for Vendors when social media access is limited or unavailable

If social media is not accessible to you, feel free to email photos together with brief descriptions, which we may post. Send you email to: info@ptboregionalfarmersmarket.com.

4. Customer recommendations and expected behaviours at Market

Since it is not business as usual at the Market, customers also have to adapt their behaviours. Signage has been created for the market to prompt these behaviours and vendors can help education their customers on these new expectations, which include:

- Only sending one family member if possible to do shopping.
- Visit the Market website and connect via email or online store to preorder and prepay for products so that they can be easily picked up at market.
- Read and follow all market signs that communicate pedestrian traffic flows and other Covid-19 measures.
- Maintain physical distancing from other vendors and customers (2 meters).
- Do not eat food at the Market.
- Get in and get out.

We understand this is an enormous change from business as usual at the Market, which is usually such a friendly, inviting and socializing place for our community. We need to remain diligent with these measures now so that we can return to all the fun and enjoyment the Market brings in the the near future. We appreciate everyone's accommodation and resilience to our current reality and believe so strongly that as a community we can make it through this.

Be Safe!

Endnotes:

¹ The province of Ontario has deemed Farmers' Markets essential services.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/list-essential-workplaces>

<https://mailchi.mp/farmersmarketsontario.com/covid-19-update-6>

² <https://www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca/your-health/food-water-safety/food-safety/farmers-market-food-safety-inspections/>

³ Stanchions

