

December 4, 2020

Honorable
Governor
Address

Re: Prioritizing Distribution of the COVID-19 Vaccine

Dear Governor _____:

For the reasons discussed below the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, National Pork Producers Council, and the North American Meat Institute (the organizations) respectfully request that workers in the meat and poultry industry, including United States Department of Agriculture meat and poultry inspectors, and livestock producers be given very high priority regarding the distribution and administration of COVID-19 vaccines.

Earlier this year the Department of Homeland Security identified food manufacturing as a critical infrastructure sector, which included meat and poultry workers and livestock producers.¹ Those people have been on the front lines ensuring Americans have access to safe, nutritious, and affordable food.

The challenges packing plants and their producer suppliers in particular faced in the early stages of the pandemic were unprecedented and yet were endured. The meat industry is resilient and the supply chain remains intact.

Critical components of that resilience are the programs and protocols packers implemented in the spring and summer, programs that have proven effective in limiting the spread of the virus even while the curve nationally has been soaring in the opposite direction. Those programs and protocols, coupled with the education programs packers will undertake to explain the importance and safety of vaccination, put meatpacking facilities in an ideal position to administer the vaccine to many people in an orderly and efficient fashion.

The undersigned organizations acknowledge and support the Centers for Disease Control's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recent recommendation administering the vaccine first to health care workers and certain other high-risk individuals. But prioritizing thereafter meat industry workers and their livestock suppliers addresses an industry that is part of the critical infrastructure and necessary to ensure the animals are harvested and processed. Such prioritization would allow the utilization of an existing system to deliver the vaccine to a significant and important part of the workforce.

¹ Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency. <https://www.cisa.gov/identifying-critical-infrastructure-during-covid-19>.

The Committee on Equitable Allocation of Vaccine for the Novel Coronavirus, part of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, got it right when it concluded that people in the population group that includes meat and poultry workers “need to be provided the vaccine, and special efforts must be made to reach these workers in ways that encourage them to be vaccinated.”²

The systems are in place. The workers are part of the critical infrastructure and the State of _____ depends on these people to supply and process livestock so agricultural communities can thrive. For these reasons we respectfully request that, as you plan for the distribution of the vaccine, meatpacking workers, USDA inspectors, and livestock producers be given high priority to receive vaccinations.

Respectfully submitted,

National Cattlemen’s Beef Association
National Pork Producers Council
North American Meat Institute

² *Discussion Draft of the Preliminary Framework for Equitable Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine*, p. 67.