Dear 4-H members, volunteers, and families:

In response to the rapidly evolving events surrounding COVID-19 (also called novel coronavirus), Washington State University (our sponsoring institution that houses Washington State Extension and 4-H programming) has activated an emergency operations group focused on coordinating the university’s response.

We have been asked specifically how COVID-19 may impact upcoming events including 4-H and Master Gardener meetings and events. WSU is following guidance from local health departments, the State Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding large gatherings, including [CDC recommendations](http://lists.cahnrs.wsu.edu/cgi-bin/dada/mail.cgi/r/auto_extension_a/060601468979/stephanie.roeter/wsu.edu/) on preventing the spread of COVID-19. Because our WSU Extension system occupies locations across the State, 4-H faculty and staff are attentive to changing local conditions and will exercise information-based judgment to address their situations.

The county public health office is the most reliable source of local information on this topic. Below are links to our local public health office COVID-19 related updates that we will be supporting:

Chelan and Douglas County Public Health: <https://cdhd.wa.gov/>

Grant County Public Health: <http://granthealth.org/>

Along with these public health office recommendations, please know the following:

* An effective strategy for minimizing the spread of the virus is greater social distancing, which can include more effective use of technology. When possible, WSU Extension encourages phone calls or Zoom videoconferences in place of large meetings or face-to-face contact in significant numbers. Attendees may also call-in to videoconferences from any cell or landline.

For assistance in setting up or connecting via Zoom or to organize a zoom meeting without time or participant restrictions:

* + **Chelan and/or Douglas County**, please contact Brenda Brenda.baldwin@wsu.edu, and/or Michelle Michelle.lain@wsu.edu.
	+ **Grant County** may contact Abby abby.simonson@wsu.edu and/or Jeannie jmkiehn@wsu.edu
	+ I am also available for anyone in the tri-county area to assist with zoom calls: stephanie.roeter@wsu.edu

*Please contact us in advance during regular business hours if you anticipate needing assistance.*

* Anyone who is sick or exhibiting signs of illness should stay home.
* Decisions on individual 4-H, Master Gardener and other meetings will be made on a case-by-case basis informed by local conditions and advice.
* Currently, older adults and persons with underlying health conditions are considered to be at increased risk of severe illness and complications from COVID-19. Examples of underlying health conditions include heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, people with weakened immune systems, and people who are pregnant. The CDC recommends that people in high-risk groups consult with their healthcare provider about attending any large gathering.
* Follow preventive hygiene guidance, including washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, avoiding touching your face with unwashed hands, and use hand sanitizer if you can’t wash. If you have to cough or sneeze, do so into your sleeve or a tissue which you then throw away. Clean and disinfect shared surfaces and objects that are touched frequently.

***Events:***  When making decisions regarding individual events, we will consider the following criteria:

1. Any guidance from the local Health Department or State DOH.
2. Whether participants are expected from any location where community transmission of COVID 19 has been confirmed.
3. The number of people involved, size of the venue, and opportunity for personal hygiene-type mitigation strategies such as social distancing (more separation between people) and avoidance of physical contact, hand washing/sanitizer stations, etc.
4. Any special risk factors such as age or underlying health for the participating population.
5. Opportunities for remote participation (Zoom) or substitution of experience rather than attending in person.
6. Impact on the program or participant qualifications for other events or programs.
	* We will consider relaxing deadlines and mandatory attendance on a case-by-case basis on requirements where our local 4-H staff and faculty have the authority to do so. However, please know that we do not have control over requirements mandated by outside agencies such as county and state fairs.

With these considerations in mind, the following state-level events have been cancelled:

* Springtime Youth Calf Sale - March 21 – All scheduled activities including workshops;
* State Dairy Quiz Bowl Contest - March 21; and
* Cougar Youth Weekend - March 28 & 29
* Whatcom County Youth Fair (not a 4-H sanctioned event, but a learning fair) is also cancelled.

Campus leadership is working with others from across the university to develop and implement response guidance and continuity of operations plans for our academic, research, Extension and other programs and services as this public health issue progresses. This guidance may be further updated in the coming days depending on changing local or global conditions. I will provide continuing updates as they become available, and the latest information also will be available for [https://wsu.edu/covid-19/](http://lists.cahnrs.wsu.edu/cgi-bin/dada/mail.cgi/r/auto_extension_a/523142357681/stephanie.roeter/wsu.edu/).

Please also refer to the Center for Disease Control [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html](http://lists.cahnrs.wsu.edu/cgi-bin/dada/mail.cgi/r/auto_extension_a/802072696921/stephanie.roeter/wsu.edu/) and Washington Department of Health websites for additional information and individual prevention strategies: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/NovelCoronavirusFactSheet.pdf>

Sincerely,