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CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY OFFICIALS PROVIDE UPDATE ON EVOLVING COVID-19 OUTBREAK AT FIELDBROOK FOODS, INC.

Testing Clinic Reports 24 New Cases at Fieldbrook Foods Inc.

Residents Reminded to Take Precautions to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19



Pictured, from left--PJ Wendel, Chautauqua County Executive, and Christine Schuyler, Chautauqua County Public Health Director.

MAYVILLE, N.Y.: – Chautauqua County Executive PJ Wendel and County Public Health Director Christine Schuyler discussed the current COVID-19 outbreak at Fieldbrook Foods, Inc. in Dunkirk at a press conference today at 10 a.m.

A mass COVID-19 testing clinic was held on Tuesday, August 25, 2020 for employees of Fieldbrook Foods Inc. after a cluster of cases was identified among workers. Schuyler reported that 393 employees were tested, 24 (6.1%) received positive results. Public Health Nurses are continuing case investigations and the NYSDOH Virtual Contact Tracing system is following up with close contacts identified by those who tested positive. People who tested positive were placed in Mandatory Isolation and close contacts were placed in Mandatory Quarantine by order of the Public Health Director.

In June, one case of COVID-19 was reported at Fieldbrook Foods. This case was investigated and determined to be isolated with no threat of spread. Since August 16 and including the results of the recent testing event, the County Health Department has been notified of and investigated 49 cases of COVID-19 in Fieldbrook employees and 14 cases in close contacts of those employees. All communicable disease protocols have been adhered to including isolation and quarantine. The outbreak investigation is ongoing.

“Our Public Health staff continues to work proactively and tirelessly with Fieldbrook Foods and the regional offices of the New York State Department of Health and Agriculture and Markets to protect employees and the community and identify steps needed to prevent further spread of COVID-19,” said Schuyler. “We have taken all appropriate and necessary actions during this outbreak and I am extremely proud of my staff and grateful for the many partners who are working collaboratively with us during these unprecedented times.”

Local and state investigations have confirmed that Fieldbrook Foods Inc., as an essential business, has been following state and federal guidelines and regulations throughout this pandemic. By nature of the business they conduct as a milk/ice cream producer, Fieldbrook Foods conducts thorough sanitization and disinfection of the Dunkirk facility on a nightly basis. Deep cleaning efforts will continue. In addition, cleaning and disinfection efforts throughout the facility will be enhanced throughout the first and second shifts of operation as well, including but not limited to frequently touched surfaces and common areas.

“At this time, this County Health Department, in consensus with the NYSDOH and NYS Ag & Markets, has determined that there is no need to close down operations at the Fieldbrook Foods Dunkirk plant,” said Schuyler.

Schuyler also reported that outside of the August 25 testing event, many employees were tested for COVID-19 because of the mandatory screening of all employees before each shift. Employees with symptoms of COVID-19 are immediately isolated and sent for testing at a health care provider. Fieldbrook Foods Inc. has been cooperative with testing and tracing efforts and any colleagues, family or friends who are identified as close contacts are quarantined for a period of 14 days from the time of exposure.

“It is important for everyone to continue social distancing efforts in the community,” said Wendel. “Preventing the spread of COVID-19 rests with each and every one of us. Precautions must be followed when at work, at school, and during off hours. Being within six feet of a person with COVID-19 for ten minutes or more is the most likely route of transmission of this disease. Be safe by assuming that everyone is infected. Practice social distancing, wash hands frequently, wear a mask, and stay home and away from others if you are experiencing any symptoms which may be associated with COVID-19.”

New York State is also offering free rapid testing sites in Western New York. Of the eight sites, there will be one in Chautauqua County at the Dunkirk Fire Murphy Training Grounds, 665 Brigham Rd. in Dunkirk, N.Y. All testing sites will open Saturday, August 29 and will be open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. from Saturday through Wednesday by appointment only.

All residents are eligible for tests and appointments can be made by calling 833-697-8764. All tests at these sites are free of charge and results will be available within 15 minutes to help support contact tracing efforts and control the spread of the virus.

The County Health Department is also working with community partners to disseminate educational information throughout the county. For more information about COVID-19 in Chautauqua County, visit <https://chggov.com>. For general information about COVID-19, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

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