

## MPALA COVID-19 POLICY 2021

### 1. COVID-19 POLICY

#### 1.1 BRIEF & PURPOSE OF POLICY

This policy includes the measures we are actively taking to mitigate the spread of Corona Virus. You are kindly requested to follow all these rules diligently, to sustain a healthy and safe workplace in this unique environment.

We all must respond diligently and transparently to these health precautions. We assure you that we will always treat your private health and personal data with high confidentiality and sensitivity. This Corona Virus (COVID-19) policy is susceptible to changes with the introduction of additional governmental guidelines.

#### 1.2 WHAT IS COVID-19?

Covid-19 is a severe respiratory illness caused by a newly discovered Coronavirus.

Most people who fall sick with Covid-19 will experience mild to moderate symptoms and recover without special treatment. Transmission is through droplets generated when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or exhales. These droplets are too heavy to hang in the air and quickly fall on floors or surfaces.

Infection takes place by breathing in the virus if you are within proximity of someone who has Covid-19, or by touching a contaminated surface and then you touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.

Most common symptoms

- fever
- dry cough
- fatigue/tiredness

Less common symptoms:

- aches and pains
- sore throat
- diarrhea
- conjunctivitis/pink eye
- headache
- loss of taste or smell
- a rash on the skin, or discoloration of fingers or toes

Serious symptoms:

- difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- chest pain or pressure
- loss of speech or movement

Understand these facts and learn how to protect yourself and the people around you. This is critical to avoid infection or spread of the virus. One can reduce the potential for infection by taking the following precautions:

- Practice effective physical distancing by avoiding close contact with other individuals. Maintain a distance of 1.5 meters from others.
- Wear your mask at all times while working.
- The legal prohibitions of outdoor meetings and events continue to evolve. Maintain outdoor meetings of 15 or fewer participants as per the law.
- Wash your hands often for at least twenty seconds with running water and soap or use hand rub/sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your face, mouth, or eyes.
- Cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of your elbow.
- Avoid sharing tools, phones, or other objects if possible.
- Ensure you have the right waste management plan e.g. no-touch trash bins
- Stay home if you feel unwell (self-isolation)
- If you have a fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention.

## **2. RULES AND REGULATIONS**

### **2.1 STAFF**

- Clear any official travel to other regions outside Laikipia through the ED's office.
- Official travel to neighbouring ranches and regions that are neighbouring Laikipia must be cleared through the HR office.
- We strongly recommend against non-essential travel for all staff, to areas outside Laikipia County.
- Staff commuting daily from Nanyuki are required to exercise extra caution, and avoid unnecessary travel out of Nanyuki.
- All staff traveling for their leave and off time, to seek prior approval from the HR office before making such plans.
- Staff returning from leave to seek prior approval from the HR office before making travel plans.

- No visitors are allowed into the staff housing.
- Keep your facemask on at all times, especially when interacting with people or in a vehicle.
- All staff must maintain social distance (1.5 meters) while working and interacting with other staff.
- There are no staff gatherings, and whenever staff have to meet, they have to do so with guidance and authorization from the HR Office.
- Commuting staff and all entering Mpala will be required to provide their residential information. In the following format.
  - Name of town: (Nanyuki)
  - Name of the Estate/ Village: (Thingithu)
  - Name of the nearest shopping Centre/Landmark: This can be a church, school, popular building, hotel, hospital, or police station (Nanyuki Nursing Home)

## 2.2 GATE ENTRY CHECKS

- All people entering Mpala will go through temperature checks, after washing their hands in the provided handwashing facilities.
- Temperatures will be recorded by trained security personnel
- One can enter the premises only if their temperature is below 37.5° C.
- The medical practitioner will be informed immediately to run further examination if a person records a higher temperature than 37.5°C. The incident will be reported to the administration.
- If confirmed a probable case, the matter will be reported to the county Covid-19 surveillance team for the evacuation of the patient using the appropriate drills.
- Contact tracing of staff close to the suspected case will begin.
- Isolate all the other persons in contact with the said individual.
- Secure the vehicle used for fumigation.
- Evacuate all non-staff from the facility including families and maintain the lowest number of staff within the facility.
- Management should advise the staff on the levels of risk of infection (some members of staff are at a higher risk of getting infected than others)
- The County and National Covid-19 surveillance and response team, depending on the level of infection, will take up any suspicious cases and contact guidelines will be availed on the institution's way forward.

### **3. COVID-19 RESPONSE AND PREPAREDNESS**

#### **3.1 STAFF WELFARE**

Due to Covid-19, the management has taken the following measures to ensure that staff stays safe and healthy as they work at Mpala.

- In line with regulations, close of daily business is at 4.30 pm. This way, staff get to their various destinations in time without risking curfew.
- In the offices, we are enforcing physical distancing, this has led to staff working in shifts and using outside sitting facilities and laboratories.
- We have put up handwashing stations and hand sanitizers at all strategic positions including all main entrances, offices, staff quarters, bomas, and outposts.
- All staff have been issued with face masks
- We have been able to establish a quarantine center with a 6-bed capacity at Mpala Academy with the help of the British Army Training Unit Kenya (BATUK).
- We are conducting a daily census of staff who live in both staff quarters.
  
- Excess office furniture and superfluous items shall be removed. Also, tables and chairs shall be spaced apart or taped off to ensure proper distancing and spacing.
- Where equipment such as headsets, personal computers, desks, telephones are used, these will be dedicated to one staff member.

#### **3.2 OFFICE SPACE**

- Staff offices shall have provision for adequate ventilation.
- Develop office staff work schedules and shifts and provide the option of working from home where practicable.
- Office staff shifts shall be staggered and teams/shifts reduced to limit the number of staff in offices in line with the HR manual.

#### **3.3 SICK LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS**

- If you have cold symptoms, such as cough/sneezing/fever, or feel poorly, request sick leave according to the laid down procedure in the HR manual.
- If you have a positive Covid-19 diagnosis, you can return to the office only after you have fully recovered, with a doctor's note confirming your recovery.

#### **3.4 RESEARCHERS BEFORE ARRIVAL**

- Arrange bookings/reservations as a pre-requisite for guests visiting the facility.
- Make provisions to enable guests to complete medical and travel declaration forms online at the time of reservation/booking before arrival as appropriate.

- Grant access to the facility upon assessment of the level of risks of exposure to Covid-19 and taking precautionary measures in line with this protocol and MOH guidelines.

### **3.5 UPON ARRIVAL**

- Ensure prompt, clear, accurate, consistent, and enhanced communication with researchers on the new health and safety protocols, both digitally and physically placed at strategic points.
- Take a Covid-19 test, five days after arrival.
- Make provision for an easily accessible centralized platform for information access and dissemination for researchers, staff, and suppliers.
- Standard safety briefings shall be provided to all guests in line with the facilities' SOPs for the first arrival, check-in, or boarding of vehicles. The information and briefings shall emphasize Covid-19 measures enhancing guests and staff safety, and shall cover;
  - Frequent and correct hand washing/sanitizing
  - Surface sanitizing
  - Physical distancing, spacing, and queues
  - Use of masks
  - Brief on high temperature and other Covid-19 symptoms
  - Access to medical services and pharmacies

## **4. FIELDWORK PROTOCOLS**

While planning to begin a project that requires field visits whether inside or outside Mpala grounds, there are necessary steps that should be put into consideration for effective implementation of the Covid-19 regulations as well as the safety of the project team and the local people living in the communities in and around the specified fieldwork site.

### **4.1 FIELDWORK WITHIN MPALA**

For projects conducting field visits within Mpala grounds e.g., Klee, UHURU, Insect-plant lab, FLAIR, etc. kindly observe the following protocols:

- Ensure you inform Control of your destination, planned period, and planned activity.
- All designated drivers should ensure there is sanitizer in the vehicle. The kitchen store will provide the sanitizers.
- Stop for gate temperature checks before leaving the center and after the field visit when you return.
- Keep your facemask on while in close contact with others.
- Ensure that you follow all other Covid-19 preventive procedures for your safety and that of your team.

## 4.2 FIELDWORK OUTSIDE MPALA

For projects conducting field visits outside Mpala grounds and entering privately owned or community-owned lands, kindly observe the protocols above in addition to the protocols below:

- Prior arrangements for a field visit should be made with the following departments:
  - Security
  - Human resources
  - Workshop
  - Research compliance
  - Operations
- At least one Mpala representative (most preferably from the specified local area) and the project leaders will make an introductory visit to the area to meet with the local authorities, village elders, county representatives, etc. The project should present updated paperwork and research permits and give clear details of what the fieldwork entails.
- The leaders will enable community mobilization and discussions to ensure that people understand the purpose, scope, and timeline of the project in their area and the guidelines in place for the control and prevention of Covid-19.
- A second visit will be made after communication and agreement with all three parties Mpala, the project, and the community. Hold this meeting in an open space with all Covid-19 protocols observed. Questions raised will be answered during this visit and the commencement date will be agreed upon.
- A brief Covid-19 awareness session will be held to educate the community on the following:
  - How it spreads
  - Signs and symptoms
  - Classification of levels of exposure and risk of infection
  - Infection prevention and general hygiene practices
  - Respiratory etiquette (cover coughs and sneezes with elbows or disposable tissues)
  - Self-isolation and quarantine
- Observance and compliance with the safety and health standards and regulations issued and enforced by Mpala, OSHA, and Kenyan laws are key.

## 4.3 EMERGENCY CONSIDERATIONS

Consider emergency preparedness while planning for fieldwork/site visits. The following factors should enable the project to plan properly.

- Emergency contacts.

These are people at/near the fieldwork site can reach the team if necessary. They should be familiar with the project's schedule. Report any suspicious medical conditions of the fieldworkers or the locals involved in the project to the following contacts:

-Mpala Clinic: +254 710 391226

-Mpala Control: +254 772 481213

- Emergency procedures.

These are plans developed in advance regarding how to respond properly to adverse situations that might be encountered during fieldwork. The fieldwork leader is responsible for organizing emergency procedures and ensuring all members of the group are aware of the arrangements.

- Communication

Establish methods before fieldwork to ensure communication within the group and with the locals.

Communication mechanisms can include the following:

- Verify that your communication device (i.e. cell phone, radio, etc.) functions at the worksite.
- Establish a predetermined frequency of contact or “roll call” with all fieldworkers.

#### **4.4 ADDITIONAL FIELDWORK CONSIDERATIONS**

- Be sure all specimen/sample collections are legal by obtaining all required permits.
- Do not enter or take private property without prior authorization.
- Check-in with the local authorities before starting the day’s tasks.
- Local people’s input should be voluntary or contracted with the HR office.
- Compensation for locals will be guided by Mpala administration based on the needs of the specific project and the community involved.

#### **5. SANITATION AND HYGIENE PRACTICES**

- Mpala has provided approved hand sanitizers and hand wash with running water and soap at the entrance/exit and other strategic locations proportional to the size of the facility, and these facilities shall be hygienically operated.
- There are visible notices and more information at strategic locations/entrances on Covid-19 preventive measures, screening, frequent hand washing and sanitizing and mandatory wearing of facemasks.
- Guest/visitors register shall be kept and updated daily and include mobile contact & physical address for ease in contact tracing.
- Make provision for designated floor markings of at least 1.5-meter distance to protect staff and maintain social distancing in areas likely to have queues.

- Where practical, doors shall be left/wedged open to reduce surface touching or security shall be deployed to open doors to limit touching of surfaces.
- Develop cleaning procedures with appropriate disinfectants/sanitizers focusing on the person's body, luggage, travel documents, and high-frequency touchpoints/surfaces.
- Luggage shall either be sprayed with a disinfection spray after off-loading, or wiped, and all handles and corners carefully wiped with surface sanitizer.
- Ensure public facilities (washrooms, lobby/lounge, etc) adhere to social distancing, frequent cleaning, and disinfection and provided with an adequate supply of hand washing and sanitizing facilities.
- Maintain records of sanitized areas/surfaces, detergents used, and personnel involved in the cleaning and sanitization process.
- Provide separate pedal waste bins at strategic locations and the appropriate method for collection and storage of used PPEs to ensure hygienic waste disposal with minimum contact.
- Establish and maintain a documented list of emergency contacts, reporting system, and evacuation procedures for any arising health-related incidents at the facility.

## **6. ROOMS AND CATERING**

### **6.1 STAFF SAFETY MEASURES**

- Staff working directly with guests, (gates, catering, and rooms) shall have valid covid-19 free certification not more than 14 days old from a recognized government-approved facility at the first time and subsequently maintain Covid-19 prevention guidelines prescribed by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and relevant agencies.
- Mpala shall provide staff with appropriate, quality, and sufficient approved PPEs such as masks/face shields, gloves, gowns/aprons, caps, and boots or boots covers, etc.
- Staff shall maintain a physical distance of 1.5 meters apart from guests at all times.
- Staff shall frequently wash or sanitize their hands before and immediately after entering the work premises, and after touching items or surfaces.
- Staff stationed in their areas of operation shall be responsible for sanitizing the area surfaces after every service or periodically as may be necessary.
- Surface sanitizing schedules shall be drawn up for other areas, which are not used continuously by members of staff.
- Staff handling luggage shall utilize gloves, sanitize or wash hands immediately before and after touching luggage.
- A staff member with a suspect temperature or showing Covid-19 symptoms shall not be allowed within areas of operation and shall instead be required to self isolate for a minimum of fourteen (14) days
- Special considerations shall be given to staff at higher risk such as those who are older or have co-morbidity conditions.



- Where a staff member is confirmed Covid-19 positive, all staff on that members' shift team shall self-isolate for 14 days after which they shall be tested and Covid-19 free staff allowed to return to work.
- Staff transport vehicles shall adhere to safety and hygiene practices concerning social distancing, sanitizing, cleaning, capacity, entry and exit, and interaction.
- Where outsourced workers are concerned, the company shall ensure their staff records are kept and they follow the standard operating procedures of Mpala.

## **6.2 ROOMS, BANDAS AND HOUSES**

- Where rooms are used and shared between non-group/non-family members, a maximum number of occupants per room, at approximately 50% of capacity, must be determined with 4 – 5m<sup>2</sup> minimum spacing per bed.
- Provide travel-size hand sanitizer to guests as part of in-room amenities during their stay.
- Room cleaning and linen change frequency may be reduced to lower contamination risks during the Covid-19 period.
- When cleaning rooms, contact surfaces, and floors shall be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected, beddings and linen, handled with care to avoid contact, and soiled linen bagged immediately after removal.
- Gloves shall be changed between rooms and disposed of safely.
- Extra cushions, throws, blankets, and décor items shall be removed.
- On check-out, all furniture, all surfaces, all movable items, wall surfaces close to traffic/seating/lying areas, all floors and bathrooms shall be thoroughly cleaned with an effective disinfectant.
- Consideration shall be given to increasing the time between check-out and check-in to ensure the housekeeping team has sufficient time for thorough and deep cleaning of rooms.
- Laundry shall be handled with masks and gloves under all circumstances and guest's laundry items handled separately for each room.

## **7. ACTION TO BE TAKEN**

### **7.1 IN THE EVENT A CASE IS DETECTED AT MPALA**

- The staff will be put in isolation,
- The case immediately reported to management and follow up with the County Covid-19 surveillance and respond team for evacuation,
- All contact person established and traced,
- All contact places established for fumigation,
- Restrain movement within houses in the institution
- Reduce the level of interaction

## **7.2 IN THE EVENT OF SEVERAL CASES IN NANYUKI**

- 90% reduction of staff commuting from Nanyuki daily into the facility allow only very essential service staff to commute.
- Should the situation escalate, essential service staff to be relocated and work from site,
- Map out staff residences within Nanyuki town to figure out hotspot areas,
- Hold back all staff from off and leaves, until such a time declared safe
- Avail medical response team in conjunction with the county security and the Covid-19 surveillance and response team.
- Liaison with the workshop to dedicate a vehicle for periodic administration matters/ controlled shopping plan for the staff,
- Enforce 100% hand washing, putting on masks, and observation of social distance at all time,
- Periodic fumigation of commonly/shared used utilities,
- Work with the County security team to regulate the use of the public road that crosses through the facility, to secure the posts along the route.

These guidelines are to be observed by all staff at all times. Failure to observe the set guidelines will lead to disciplinary action as guided by the Employment Act, Chapter 226.